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Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru

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Jawaharlal Nehru
April 1937

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Volume Eight

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FOREWORD

Jawaharlal Nehru is one of the key figures of the twentieth century. He symbolised some of the major forces which have transformed our age.

When Jawaharlal Nehru was young, history was still the privilege of the West; the rest of the world lay in deliberate darkness. The impression given was that the vast continents of Asia and Africa existed merely to sustain their masters in Europe and North America. Jawaharlal Nehru's own education in Britain could be interpreted, in a sense, as an attempt to secure for him a place within the pale. His letters of the time are evidence of his sensitivity, his interest in science and international affairs as well as of his pride in India and Asia. But his personality was veiled by his shyness and a facade of nonchalance, and perhaps, outwardly there was not much to distinguish him from the ordinary run of men. Gradually there emerged the warm and universal being who became intensely involved with the problems of the poor and the oppressed in all lands. In doing so, Jawaharlal Nehru gave articulation and leadership to millions of people in his own country and in Asia and Africa.

That imperialism was a curse which should be lifted from the brows of men, that poverty was incompatible with civilisation, that nationalism should be poised on a sense of international community and that it was not sufficient to brood on these things when action was urgent and compelling — these were the principles which inspired and gave vitality to Jawaharlal Nehru's activities in the years of India's struggle for freedom and made him not only an intense nationalist but one of the leaders of humanism.

No particular ideological doctrine could claim Jawaharlal Nehru for its own. Long days in jail were spent in reading widely. He drew much from the thought of the East and West and from the philosophies of the past and the present. Never religious in the formal sense, yet he had a deep love for the culture and tradition of his own land. Never a rigid Marxist, yet he was deeply influenced by that theory and was particularly impressed by what he saw in the Soviet Union on his first visit in 1927. However, he realised that the world was too complex, and man had too many facets, to be encompassed by any single or total explanation. He himself was a socialist with an abhorrence of regimentation and a democrat who was anxious to reconcile his faith in civil liberty with the necessity of mitigating economic and social wretchedness. His struggles,

both within himself and with the outside world, to adjust such seeming contradictions are what make his life and work significant and fascinating.

As a leader of free India, Jawaharlal Nehru recognised that his country could neither stay out of the world nor divest itself of its own interests in world affairs. But to the extent that it was possible, Jawaharlal Nehru sought to speak objectively and to be a voice of sanity in the shrill phases of the 'cold war'. Whether his influence helped on certain occasions to maintain peace is for the future historian to assess. What we do know is that for a long stretch of time he commanded an international audience reaching far beyond governments, that he spoke for ordinary, sensitive, thinking men and women around the globe and that his was a constituency which extended far beyond India.

So the story of Jawaharlal Nehru is that of a man who evolved, who grew in storm and stress till he became the representative of much that was noble in his time. It is the story of a generous and gracious human being who summed up in himself the resurgence of the 'third world' as well as the humanism which transcends dogmas and is adapted to the contemporary context. His achievement, by its very nature and setting, was much greater than that of a Prime Minister. And it is with the conviction that the life of this man is of importance not only to scholars but to all, in India and elsewhere, who are interested in the valour and compassion of the human spirit that the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund has decided to publish a series of volumes consisting of all that is significant in what Jawaharlal Nehru spoke and wrote. There is, as is to be expected in the speeches and writings of a man so engrossed in affairs and gifted with expression, much that is ephemeral; this will be omitted. The official letters and memoranda will also not find place here. But it is planned to include everything else and the whole corpus should help to remind us of the quality and endeavour of one who was not only a leader of men and a lover of mankind, but a completely integrated human being.

Indira Gandhi

New Delhi
18 January 1972

Chairman
Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund

EDITORIAL NOTE

This volume covers the period from January 1937 till Jawaharlal's departure for Europe on 2 June 1938. After the Faizpur Congress Jawaharlal resumed his strenuous election campaign and was more responsible than any other individual for the spectacular success of the Congress in almost all the provinces. Having waged this campaign primarily on the basis of rejection of the Act of 1935, he was disappointed by the Working Committee's decision to accept office. But he loyally abided by it and did all he could to assist the Congress ministries.

However, his mind and heart were elsewhere. He visited Burma and Malaya and the distant provinces of the North West Frontier and Assam. He launched a programme of 'mass contacts', especially among the Muslims and sought to deal, by argument and persuasion, with the efforts of Jinnah and the Muslim League to weaken support of the Congress among the Muslims. He took up the cause of the people in the Indian states and sustained resistance to the federal clauses of the Act of 1935. He roused the awareness of his countrymen to the danger of the spread of fascism in the world. Fascism and imperialism were blood brothers, and India should give all moral support to the peoples of Abyssinia, Spain and China. He arranged for the despatch of food and a medical unit to Spain and of medical supplies to China, and organised a boycott of Japanese goods.

Yet, amidst all this varied activity, Jawaharlal had time for reading and writing. It was in October 1937 that he wrote his article "The Rashtrapati". Published as an unsigned article, very few knew the authorship of this sharp attack on what Jawaharlal regarded as his inclination to dictatorship.

A few letters of 1935 and 1936 have also been included.

Much of the material in this volume has been selected from the papers of Jawaharlal Nehru. The cooperation extended by the Director and the staff of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library is acknowledged.

The Maharashtra Government and the National Archives of India have authorised us to utilize material in their possession. *The Bombay Chronicle, The Hindustan Times, The Tribune, The Leader* and *The Hindu* have allowed us to reprint the texts of speeches and statements first published by them. The Asia Publishing House has permitted us to reprint two letters from *A Bunch of Old Letters.* The frontispiece is from the Jamnalal Bajaj collection of photographs at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

CONTENTS

1. The Election Campaign

1	Discipline among Congressmen	2 January	1937	1
2	Message to Congress Candidates	4 January	1937	2
3	To V.K. Krishna Menon	4 January	1937	3
4	Greetings to Bihar	5 January	1937	4
5	Farewell Message to Bihar	13 January	1937	4
6	On Foot to the Polls	15 January	1937	5
7	Message to the Punjab	16 January	1937	6
8	Communalism, Sectarianism and Elections	16 January	1937	7
9	Farewell Message to the Punjab	18 January	1937	9
10	Make the Congress Stronger	19 January	1937	10
11	On Mustering of Voters	22 January	1937	12
12	To M. M. Malaviya	26 January	1937	13
13	Renewal of the Independence Pledge	26 January	1937	14
14	Make the Congress Victory Spectacular	30 January	1937	16
15	The Meaning of Complete Independence	2 February	1937	18
16	On the U.P. Government's Circular	5 February	1937	19
17	Message to the Voters of U.P.	6 February	1937	21
18	The Significance of the Election Campaign	9 February	1937	21
19	Message to the Nation	10 February	1937	25
20	Appeal to Kerala	10 February	1937	25
21	On the Electoral Success in U.P.	13 February	1937	26
22	Message to South and West India	16 February	1937	27
23	To Agatha Harrison	22 February	1937	28
24	To V.K. Krishna Menon	22 February	1937	29

25	To Sir Stafford Cripps	22 February	1937	31
26	To Govind D. Madgavkar	24 February	1937	34
27	On the Victimisation of Students	24 February	1937	35
28	To N. G. Ranga	5 March	1937	36
29	To Mohan Chandra Mohanta	9 March	1937	38
30	The Congress and the Muslims	11 March	1937	39
31	On the Prohibitory Orders in Calcutta	27 March	1937	40
32	To Ramananda Teertha	9 April	1937	41
33	The Election Tour	14 April	1938	41
34	A Note on the Tour			42

2. Office Acceptance

1	Circular to P.C.Cs	9 February	1937	47
2	The Need for Sanctions	19 February	1937	48
3	The Importance of Mass Contacts	19 February	1937	48
4	Congressmen and Ministries	19 February	1937	50
5	Circular to P.C.Cs	3 March	1937	51
6	The Need for a Long-term View	3 March	1937	53
7	The Snare of the Constitution	6 March	1937	54
8	To Vallabhbhai Patel	8 March	1937	55
9	Speculations about Office Acceptance	8 March	1937	57
10	On Non-acceptance of Office	14 March	1937	58
11	On Formation of Congress Ministries	19 March	1937	59
12	Presidential Address to the All India Convention of Congress Legislators	19 March	1937	60
13	Observance of the Anti-Constitution Day	22 March	1937	71
14	On the Futility of Office Acceptance	23 March	1937	72
15	To Lord Lothian	25 March	1937	74

16	On the Fascist Nature of the Constitution	28 March	1937	75
17	To V. K. Krishna Menon	28 March	1937	76
18	On the Breakdown of the Negotiations	29 March	1937	76
19	To Abdul Walli	30 March	1937	77
20	To Govind Ballabh Pant	30 March	1937	78
21	On the Success of Anti-Constitution Day	7 April	1937	78
22	On Federation and Deadlocks	8 April	1937	80
23	On Lord Zetland's Statement	9 April	1937	81
24	On Lord Lothian's Statement	14 April	1937	82
25	The Magnitude of the Crisis	16 April	1937	83
26	To Agatha Harrison	18 April	1937	84
27	To V. K. Krishna Menon	21 April	1937	85
28	To Horace Alexander	21 April	1937	86
29	To H. N. Brailsford	22 April	1937	87
30	To William B. Benton	22 April	1937	88
31	To W. P. Crozier	22 April	1937	88
32	To Sir Stafford Cripps	22 April	1937	90
33	To V.K. Krishna Menon	2 May	1937	90
34	The Princes and the Federation	3 May	1937	91
35	The Strike of Jute Workers in Bengal	3 May	1937	92
36	The Constitutional Deadlock and the Constructive Programme	3 May	1937	95
37	To E. B. Shawe	5 May	1937	96
38	The Unchanged Policy of the Congress	15 June	1937	99
39	On Rumours of Forming Ministries	16 June	1937	100
40	To W. P. Crozier	24 June	1937	101
41	To Agatha Harrison	24 June	1937	102
42	To M. N. Roy	25 June	1937	103
43	The Working Committee and Office Acceptance	7 July	1937	105
44	The Decision to Accept Office	10/20 July	1937	106
45	On Coalitions	10 July	1937	110
46	On the Working of the Minority Ministries	13 July	1937	111
47	To V. K. Krishna Menon	19 July	1937	111

48	To H. Khan	19 July	1937	112
49	Note on the Constitutional Impasse	July	1937	113

3. The Congress and the Muslims

1	The Congress and the Muslims	10 January	1937	119
2	The Need for Greater Contacts with Muslims	31 March	1937	122
3	Rejoinder to M. A. Jinnah	25 April	1937	124
4	The Congress and the Muslims	25 April	1937	125
5	The Congress and the Muslims	2 May	1937	129
6	On the Press Attacks on Jinnah	23 May	1937	132
7	To Mohanlal Saxena	22 June	1937	133
8	To Rafi Ahmad Kidwai	23 June	1937	134
9	To Mohanlal Saxena	23 June	1937	134
10	To Khaliquzzaman	27 June	1937	135
11	The Communal Approach of Jinnah	30 June	1937	136
12	To N. A. K. Sherwani	30 June	1937	138
13	To R. V. Dhulekar	30 June	1937	139
14	To A. G. Kher	30 June	1937	140
15	To Manilal Pande	30 June	1937	141
16	To Khaliquzzaman	1 July	1937	141
17	To A. G. Kher	1 July	1937	144
18	To Har Prasad Singh	1 July	1937	145
19	To Rafi Ahmad Kidwai	1 July	1937	146
20	To N. A. K. Sherwani	1 July	1937	147
21	To N. A. K. Sherwani	3 July	1937	148
22	Jinnah's 'Grievances'	3 July	1937	149
23	To Rafi Ahmad Kidwai	5 July	1937	152
24	To N. A. K. Sherwani	5 July	1937	154
25	The Need for an Urdu Newspaper	7 July	1937	156
26	The Importance of Urdu Newspapers	10 July	1937	156
27	To Kailas Nath Katju	10 July	1937	157
28	On the Suppression of Congress Workers	10 July	1937	158

29	To Mahatma Gandhi	13 July	1937	159
30	On a Stone-throwing Incident	14 July	1937	161
31	To Postmaster, Orai	18 July	1937	162
32	To Rafi Ahmad Kidwai	18 July	1937	162
33	To Rafiuddin Ahmed	18 July	1937	163
34	The Congress and the Muslim League	20 July	1937	164
35	To Rajendra Prasad	21 July	1937	165
36	On the Result of the Bundelkhand Bye-election	25 July	1937	171
37	To Rafiuddin Ahmed	4 August	1937	173
38	On Communalism	11 August	1937	173
39	To A. M. Balu	25 August	1937	175
40	To M. A. Jinnah	7 September	1937	176
41	No Compromise with the Muslim League	17 September	1937	178
42	To Siddiq Ahmad Siddiqui	28 September	1937	178
43	To Dewan Chaman Lal	30 September	1937	180
44	To Mahatma Gandhi	30 September	1937	182
45	To the President, The Grand Muslim Union, Bombay	5 October	1937	182
46	The Importance of Urdu Journalism	7 October	1937	183
47	To Dewan Chaman Lal	7 October	1937	184
48	The Tactics of the Muslim League	17 October	1937	185
49	To Subhas Chandra Bose	20 October	1937	186
50	On the Shia Conference	21 October	1937	190
51	To Acharya Narendra Deva	9 November	1937	190
52	To Mohammad Ismail Khan	10 November	1937	192
53	To V. K. Krishna Menon	11 November	1937	197
54	To District Magistrate, Saharanpur	11 December	1937	198
55	To Masood Husain	22 December	1937	199
56	To Mohammad Ismail Khan	26 December	1937	200
57	Misreporting in the Press	30 December	1937	205
58	To Mela Ram	31 December	1937	206
59	The Need for a Dispassionate Approach	1 January	1938	207
60	To Mohammad Ismail Khan	2 January	1938	210
61	To Mohammad Ismail Khan	18 January	1938	211
62	To M. A. Jinnah	18 January	1938	212

63	To M. A. Jinnah	4 February	1938	213
64	To Mohammad Ismail Khan	4 February	1938	217
65	To Mohammad Ismail Khan	5 February	1938	218
66	To Sayidur Rahman	10 February	1938	221
67	To M. A. Jinnah	25 February	1938	222
68	To M. A. Jinnah	8 March	1938	224
69	To C. Khaliquzzaman	22 March	1938	227
70	On the Communal Riots in Allahabad	31 March	1938	228
71	To P. D. Tandon	4 April	1938	231
72	To M. A. Jinnah	6 April	1938	232
73	On the Exaggerated Accounts of the Riots	13 April	1938	241
74	To M. A. Jinnah	16 April	1938	243
75	The Real Causes of the Riots	1 May	1938	245

4. The Working of Provincial Autonomy

MINORITY MINISTRIES

1.	On the Ban on the Kottapatam Summer School	17 June	1937	249
2	On the Viceroy's Speech	24 June	1937	250
3	To the Chief Commissioner, Delhi	1 October	1937	253

NON-CONGRESS MINISTRIES

4	The Repression in Chittagong	13 June	1937	255
5	On Strikes in Bengal and Assam	1 July	1937	256
6	On the Non-release of Political Prisoners in the Punjab	20 July	1937	257
7	To Mohammad Yamin Dar	30 August	1937	258
8	To the Secretary, Bengal P.C.C.	2 September	1937	259
9	To Lala Hansraj	28 September	1937	260
10	Message to the Indian Civil Liberties Conference	4 October	1937	261

11	To Gopichand Bhargava	5 October	1937	264
12	On the Unionist Ministry in the Punjab	11 October	1937	265
13	To the Editor, The Tribune	17 October	1937	268
14	To Saroj Kumar Ghose	20 October	1937	269
15	To Mohamed Yakub	20 October	1937	270
16	The Agitation for the Release of the Detenus	28 October	1937	271
17	The Hunger Strike of the Prisoners in the Punjab	20 January	1938	274
18	The Need for Peaceful Agitation	28 January	1938	276

CONGRESS MINISTRIES

19	Election of the Leader of the Bombay Congress Assembly Party	28 March	1937	278
20	To Leaders of Congress Parties in Provincial Assemblies	16 July	1937	280
21	To Agatha Harrison	19 July	1937	282
22	To Secretary, Maharashtra P.C.C.	20 July	1937	282
23	To Gopinath Bardoloi	21 July	1937	283
24	Salaries of Public Servants	24 July	1937	284
25	Address to the U.P. Congress Legislators	27 July	1937	286
26	To Leaders of the Congress Majority Provinces	30 July	1937	287
27	The Responsibilities of the Ministers	1 August	1937	288
28	To Gopinath Bardoloi	4 August	1937	290
29	On the Congress Policy in the Provinces	7 August	1937	291
30	To V.K. Krishna Menon	7 August	1937	293
31	The Problems before the Congress Ministries	9 August	1937	296
32	The Congress and the Federation	11 August	1937	299
33	The Congress and Mass Contact	11 August	1937	300

34	Political Consciousness among the People	12 August	1937	301
35	On the Policy of the Congress Ministries	12 August	1937	303
36	To Sajjad Zaheer	25 August	1937	307
37	To A. B. Tribhuwan	26 August	1937	308
38	To B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya	27 August	1937	309
39	The Right Perspective	30 August	1937	310
40	To S. M. Joshi	31 August	1937	319
41	To M. G. Natesa Chettiar	31 August	1937	320
42	To Prime Minister, U.P. Government	6 September	1937	321
43	The Congress and the Labour Problem	11 September	1937	321
44	The Need for Public Cooperation	12 September	1937	325
45	Interview to Congress Workers at Ahmedabad	19 September	1937	327
46	To the Mill Workers of Kanpur	23 September	1937	328
47	To Vallabhbhai Patel	23 September	1937	334
48	The Peasant Problem	27 September	1937	335
49	To Srikrishna Sinha	28 September	1937	336
50	To C. Rajagopalachari	1 October	1937	336
51	On the Working of the Congress Ministries	29 October	1937	338
52	On the Congress Attitude to Sedition	30 October	1937	343
53	The A.I.C.C. and the Congress Ministries	4 November	1937	344
54	To the Prime Ministers of the Congress Majority Provinces	4 November	1937	348
55	On the Advantages of Office Acceptance	5 November	1937	350
56	On the Kanpur Strike	9 November	1937	351
57	To Edward Thompson	11 November	1937	354
58	To C. Rajagopalachari	13 November	1937	355
59	To N. B. Khare	14 November	1937	356
60	The Reasons for Office Acceptance	15 November	1937	357
61	On the Communal Disturbances	18 November	1937	357
62	To P. Subbarayan	21 November	1937	359

63	To the Members of the Working Committee	24 November	1937	361
64	To K. Bhashyam	25 November	1937	364
65	To G. B. Pant	25 November	1937	365
66	On the Role of Congress Workers	26 November	1937	366
67	To C. Rajagopalachari	11 December	1937	368
68	To Srikrishna Sinha	11 December	1937	369
69	The Problems of the Provincial Ministries	17 December	1937	370
70	To N. B. Khare	22 December	1937	371
71	To Mahadeva Desai	26 December	1937	372
72	The Continuing Struggle	31 December	1937	372
73	To Edward Thompson	30 January	1938	375
74	On the Speaker's Position in the Legislature	1 February	1938	376
75	On Differences between Governors and Ministers	7 February	1938	377
76	To V. K. Krishna Menon	5 March	1938	378
77	To Agatha Harrison	5 March	1938	379
78	To Arabinda Sen	11 March	1938	380
79	To P. Subbarayan	11 March	1938	381
80	To Sampurnanand	26 March	1938	381
81	To General Secretary, U.P.P.C.C.	14 April	1938	383
82	On the Proposed Kisan Demonstration	14 April	1938	384
83	On the Proposed Agrarian Reforms in U.P.	17 April	1938	385
84	On the Need for Kisan Demonstrations	20 April	1938	386
85	To Mahatma Gandhi	28 April	1938	387
86	On the Difficulties of the Congress Ministries	13 May	1938	389
87	On the Congress Attitude towards Kisan Sabhas	23 May	1938	391
88	On the Working of the Congress Ministries	29 May	1938	392
89	On the Challenge of the Vested Interests	1 June	1938	393

5. Problems of Congress Organisation

1	Publicity to Congress Resolutions	2 January	1937	397
2	Importance of Mass Contacts	2 January	1937	399
3	Celebration of Independence Day	2/11 January	1937	400
4	The Ban on Independence Pledge	24 January	1937	401
5	On Understanding Congress Policy	3 March	1937	401
6	To Gopichand Bhargava	5 March	1937	402
7	To Mahatma Gandhi	8 March	1937	404
8	To Shahid Suhrawardy	10 March	1937	406
9	To Subhas Chandra Bose	16 April	1937	407
10	To B. Raja Bhushanarao	5 May	1937	410
11	To Secretary, Madras Provincial Varnashrama Swarajya Sangha	19 June	1937	412
12	To Ohabali Khan	19 June	1937	414
13	To Suresh Majumdar	20 June	1937	415
14	The Congress and Labour and Peasant Organisations	28 June	1937	417
15	To Raj Kumar Chakravarty	1 July	1937	425
16	Importance of Non-legislative Work	10 July	1937	427
17	The Congress and Peasant Organisations	10 July	1937	428
18	To President, Bengal P.C.C.	21 July	1937	430
19	To Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade	23 July	1937	431
20	To Congress Leaders of the Minority Provinces	30 July	1937	431
21	The Policy of the Congress	11 August	1937	432
22	To Ali Sardar Jafri	1 September	1937	435
23	To Sangat Singh	6 September	1937	436
24	On the Role of the Congress Socialist Party	16 September	1937	437
25	Gandhi Jayanti	23 September	1937	438
26	To S. V. Ramaswamy	2 October	1937	439
27	To S. C. Mitra	6 October	1937	442
28	On His Tour of Gujarat	7 October	1937	443

29	To Satyapal	19 October	1937	444
30	To Satyapal	9 November	1937	445
31	Allowances for Congress Members of Assemblies in Non-Congress Provinces	30 November	1937	446
32	To Bhaskar Mitter	23 December	1937	448
33	On the Training of Volunteers	24 December	1937	449
34	New Year Greetings	31 December	1937	450
35	To the General Secretary, A.I.C.C.	5 January	1938	451
36	To Sri Prakasa	31 January	1938	452
37	To Rajendra Prasad	16 April	1938	453

6. Visits to North West Frontier Province

1	Bombing and Kidnapping on the Frontier	22 June	1937	457
2	To E. B. Shawe	20 July	1937	462
3	The Task Before the Country	14 October	1937	463
4	On Communal Differences	16 October	1937	464
5	On the Frontier Problem	16 October	1937	465
6	Parting Message to the Frontier	18 October	1937	467
7	Impressions of His Visit to the Frontier	6 November	1937	468
8	On His Second Visit to the Frontier	26 January	1938	472
9	Farewell to the Frontier	28 January	1938	473
10	To Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan	29 April	1938	476

7. Visit to Assam

1	To Secretary, Assam P.C.C.	20 October	1937	481
2	Strengthen the Congress	27 November	1937	482
3	To Bishnu Ram Medhi	1 December	1937	483

4	The Necessity of Swaraj	1 December	1937	489
5	On the Threshold of Swaraj	6 December	1937	490
6	In the Valley of the Brahmaputra	9 December	1937	492
7	In the Surma Valley	9 December	1937	499

8. The National Flag

1	The National and the Red Flags	26 April	1937	505
2	The Honour of the National Flag	25 June	1937	506
3	To G. Satyanarayana	31 August	1937	507
4	To Chandra Badan Shukla	27 September	1937	508
5	To Hari Prasad Desai	1 October	1937	510
6	To Press Kamgar Union, Bombay	1 October	1937	511
7	To B. N. Prasad	10 November	1937	512
8	The National Flag	30 December	1937	513
9	To V. K. Krishna Menon	9 January	1938	515

9. "The Rashtrapati"

1	To Padmaja Naidu	5 October	1937	519
2	The Rashtrapati	5 October	1937	520
3	To Padmaja Naidu	20 October	1937	523
4	To Krishna Kripalani	2 June	1938	525

10. The Indian States

GENERAL

1	To E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad	29 March	1937	529

2	Message to the Deccan States People's Conference	25 July	1937	530
3	Message to 'Rajasthan'	29 September	1937	531

AJMER-MERWARA

4	Princes and the Federation	18 September	1937	532
5	The Indian States and the Congress	19 September	1937	533
6	On the Proposed Transfer of Territory	3 November	1937	536

ALWAR

7	To the Prime Minister, Alwar State	21 October	1937	537
8	To Shankar Lal	9 November	1937	538

BHOPAL

9	To A. S. Bazmi	23 May	1938	539
10	Feudalism in Indian States	26 May	1938	540
11	On Civil Liberties in Bhopal State	2 June	1938	541

BIKANER

12	Repression in Bikaner State	26 June	1937	542

JODHPUR

13	Feudalism in Jodhpur State	7 August	1937	545
14	Message to Jodhpur Praja Mandal	1 October	1937	546

KATHIAWAR

15	Message to Kathiawar Youth Conference	7 October	1937	547

MYSORE

16	Election Activities in Mysore State	20 February	1937	548
17	To the Mass Awakeners' Union, Bangalore	28 June	1937	549
18	To T. Siddalingiah	27 August	1937	549
19	To Secretary, Karnataka P.C.C.	27 August	1937	550
20	To N. Ramamurti	1 September	1937	551
21	To Secretary, Karnataka P.C.C.	2 September	1937	551
22	To President, Mysore Congress Board	6 September	1937	553
23	To Mirza M. Ismail	30 September	1937	554
24	To Mirza M. Ismail	19 October	1937	555
25	To Secretary, Karnataka P.C.C.	20 October	1937	558
26	To Mirza M. Ismail	4 November	1937	561
27	To M. L. Srikantaiah	9 November	1937	565
28	To Secretary, Karnataka P.C.C.	11 November	1937	566
29	To Mahatma Gandhi	14 November	1937	567
30	To R. S. Hukerikar	19 November	1937	569
31	To K. C. Reddy	19 November	1937	570
32	On the A.I.C.C. Resolution on Mysore State	26 November	1937	571
33	To Rajendra Prasad	29 November	1937	572
34	To Mirza M. Ismail	25 December	1937	573
35	To K. C. Reddy	4 January	1938	575
36	To P. Rangaswamy	4 March	1938	576
37	To H. K. Veeranna Gowdh	31 March	1938	577
38	To H. C. Dasappa	11 April	1938	578
39	To V. S. Narayana Rao	22 April	1938	579
40	To H. C. Dasappa	26 May	1938	579

ORCHHA

41	To R. S. Shukla	28 September	1937	580

11. Imperialism and Federation

1	Interview to The News Chronicle	2 January	1937	585
2	The Main Problem of India	25 February	1937	587
3	To Horace G. Alexander	17 June	1937	588
4	To Asaf Ali	5 August	1937	589
5	Hunger Strike in the Andamans	6 August	1937	590
6	On Government's Attitude towards the Andaman Prisoners	19 August	1937	593
7	On Federation	19 August	1937	594
8	On Federal Government	21/23 August	1937	595
9	Despatch of Indian Troops to China	25 August	1937	611
10	To Asaf Ali	26 August	1937	612
11	On the Hunger Strike of the Andaman Prisoners	29 August	1937	613
12	To V. K. Krishna Menon	30 August	1937	614
13	To Mrs. Duncan Harris	2 September	1937	616
14	To Sri Prakasa	2 September	1937	617
15	To Bhulabhai Desai	12 September	1937	618
16	To Carl Heath	7 October	1937	619
17	The Unity of India	8 October	1937	620
18	To Mahatma Gandhi	3 November	1937	632
19	To V. K. Krishna Menon	20 December	1937	633
20	To Agatha Harrison	23 December	1937	634
21	The Need for Indian Independence	29 January	1938	634
22	To Bhagavan Das	31 January	1938	635
23	To Bhagavan Das	8 February	1938	637
24	Rejoinder to Lord Zetland	30 May	1938	638
25	India and the World Perspective	31 May	1938	638

12. India and Her Neighbours

SRI LANKA

1	Sri Lanka	8 March	1937	645
2	Burma and Sri Lanka	11 March	1937	646
3	To K. Parameswaran Pillai	30 March	1937	648
4	To K. Natesa Aiyar	27 August	1937	649

VISIT TO BURMA

5	India and Burma	7 May	1937	650
6	Why Burma was Separated	11 May	1937	652
7	The Policy of the Indian National Congress	15 May	1937	654
8	On the Separation of Burma	17 May	1937	656
9	Farewell to Burma	20 May	1937	657
10	To V. K. Krishna Menon	22 May	1937	659
11	To Ba Maw	21 July	1937	660
12	To Niranjan C. Galliara	9 February	1938	662

VISIT TO MALAYA

13	The Situation in India	23 May	1937	663
14	Address to the Indians in Malaya	24 May	1937	666
15	On His Visit to Malaya	25 May	1937	668
16	Address to Indians in Singapore	26 May	1937	670
17	Women Should Not Be Weak	27 May	1937	676
18	To Rajendra Prasad	29 May	1937	677
19	Indian Labour in Malaya	31 May	1937	678
20	A Question of Manners	1 June	1937	684
21	Indians and Sinhalese in Malaya	2 June	1937	687

22	To Fellow Countrymen in Malaya	4 June	1937	689
23	Imperialism in Malaya and India	4 June	1937	693
24	Farewell to Malaya	4 June	1937	694
25	Back Home	19 June	1937	695
26	To the Editor, The Times of Malaya	25 July	1937	697

13. The World Situation

1	Message to the Left Book Club	8 February	1937	701
2	Food for Spain	20 February	1937	701
3	A Letter about Spain	24 February	1937	703
4	To Victor Gollancz	10 March	1937	705
5	Fascism and Empire	27 March	1937	705
6	Appeal for Aid to Spain	30 March	1937	708
7	India and China	13 April	1937	709
8	The Need for Active Support to Spain	20 April	1937	710
9	To J. Mascaro	22 April	1937	711
10	Further Appeal for Help to Spain	24 April	1937	711
11	To Govind Madgavkar	26 August	1937	712
12	To A. E. Shohet	26 August	1937	713
13	Zanzibar and the Boycott of Cloves	28 August	1937	714
14	To V. K. Krishna Menon	30 August	1937	718
15	To Hooseinbhoy A. Laljee	31 August	1937	720
16	The Congress and World Problems	4 September	1937	720
17	To Mufti Amin Husseini	4 September	1937	723
18	Formation of Clove Boycott Committees	12 September	1937	723
19	Observance of China Day, 1937	14 September	1937	724
20	Boycott of Japanese Goods	30 September	1937	725
21	To V. K. Krishna Menon	30 September	1937	725

22	To V. K. Krishna Menon	7 October	1937	727
23	On the World Situation	10 October	1937	728
24	The Need for a Broader Outlook	11 November	1937	730
25	Indian Sympathy for China	28 November	1937	731
26	Appeal to Help China	18 December	1937	732
27	Observance of China Day, 1938	24 December	1937	733
28	The Congress and China Day	25 December	1937	733
29	To Rabindranath Tagore	9 January	1938	734
30	The Need for Help to China	9 January	1938	734
31	To James S. Cushman	2 February	1938	736
32	To J. Olsvangar	2 February	1938	737
33	To Nnamdi Azikiwe	11 February	1938	737
34	To Tan Yun-Shan	10 April	1938	738
35	To Madam G. Duchene	29 April	1938	739
36	The Failure of the League of Nations	30 April	1938	740
37	India and World Politics	18 May	1938	742
38	On Framing India's Foreign Policy	26 May	1938	744
39	Despatch of Medical Unit to China	1 June	1938	747

14. The Haripura Congress and After

1	Report to the A.I.C.C. at Haripura	10 February	1938	751
2	The Congress and Federation	18 February	1938	759
3	The Congress and the Indian States	19 February	1938	761
4	The Congress and Burma	19 February	1938	764
5	On the Rights of Minorities	20 February	1938	765
6	On the Hunger Strike by Political Prisoners	20 February	1938	769
7	To N.S. Hardikar	14 March	1938	771

15. General

PERSONAL

1	To Mohanlal Nehru	18 January	1935	777
2	To Indira Nehru	26 May	1935	781
3	To Indira Nehru	15 January	1936	785
4	To Indira Nehru	30 January	1936	787
5	To Indira Nehru	8 March	1936	788
6	To Indira Nehru	1 April	1936	789
7	To Indira Nehru	27 April	1936	791
8	To Indira Nehru	30 April	1936	792
9	To Indira Nehru	4 May	1936	793
10	To Indira Nehru	7 May	1936	794
11	To Indira Nehru	2 June	1936	794
12	To Indira Nehru	29 June	1936	795
13	To Indira Nehru	5 October	1936	797
14	To Indira Nehru	15 October	1936	798
15	To Indira Nehru	1 November	1936	800
16	To Indira Nehru	5 November	1936	801
17	To Indira Nehru	25 November	1936	802
18	To Indira Nehru	8 December	1936	803
19	To Indira Nehru	14 December	1936	804

ON SCIENCE

20	Science and Planning	26 December	1937	806
21	The Progress of Science	5 March	1938	808

TO THE STUDENTS

22	On the Kanpur Students' Strike	21 February	1937	813
23	To P.S. Singh	18 April	1937	814
24	The Republic of Youth	2 August	1937	815
25	Students and National Service	30 August	1937	816
26	Law and Society	1 September	1937	817
27	Students and Discipline	28 September	1937	819
28	Commitment and Creativity	17 November	1937	821

22	To V. K. Krishna Menon	7 October	1937	727
23	On the World Situation	10 October	1937	728
24	The Need for a Broader Outlook	11 November	1937	730
25	Indian Sympathy for China	28 November	1937	731
26	Appeal to Help China	18 December	1937	732
27	Observance of China Day, 1938	24 December	1937	733
28	The Congress and China Day	25 December	1937	733
29	To Rabindranath Tagore	9 January	1938	734
30	The Need for Help to China	9 January	1938	734
31	To James S. Cushman	2 February	1938	736
32	To J. Olsvangar	2 February	1938	737
33	To Nnamdi Azikiwe	11 February	1938	737
34	To Tan Yun-Shan	10 April	1938	738
35	To Madam G. Duchene	29 April	1938	739
36	The Failure of the League of Nations	30 April	1938	740
37	India and World Politics	18 May	1938	742
38	On Framing India's Foreign Policy	26 May	1938	744
39	Despatch of Medical Unit to China	1 June	1938	747

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2	The Congress and Federation	18 February	1938	759
3	The Congress and the Indian States	19 February	1938	761
4	The Congress and Burma	19 February	1938	764
5	On the Rights of Minorities	20 February	1938	765
6	On the Hunger Strike by Political Prisoners	20 February	1938	769
7	To N.S. Hardikar	14 March	1938	771

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1	To Mohanlal Nehru	18 January	1935	777
2	To Indira Nehru	26 May	1935	781
3	To Indira Nehru	15 January	1936	785
4	To Indira Nehru	30 January	1936	787
5	To Indira Nehru	8 March	1936	788
6	To Indira Nehru	1 April	1936	789
7	To Indira Nehru	27 April	1936	791
8	To Indira Nehru	30 April	1936	792
9	To Indira Nehru	4 May	1936	793
10	To Indira Nehru	7 May	1936	794
11	To Indira Nehru	2 June	1936	794
12	To Indira Nehru	29 June	1936	795
13	To Indira Nehru	5 October	1936	797
14	To Indira Nehru	15 October	1936	798
15	To Indira Nehru	1 November	1936	800
16	To Indira Nehru	5 November	1936	801
17	To Indira Nehru	25 November	1936	802
18	To Indira Nehru	8 December	1936	803
19	To Indira Nehru	14 December	1936	804

ON SCIENCE

20	Science and Planning	26 December	1937	806
21	The Progress of Science	5 March	1938	808

TO THE STUDENTS

22	On the Kanpur Students' Strike	21 February	1937	813
23	To P.S. Singh	18 April	1937	814
24	The Republic of Youth	2 August	1937	815
25	Students and National Service	30 August	1937	816
26	Law and Society	1 September	1937	817
27	Students and Discipline	28 September	1937	819
28	Commitment and Creativity	17 November	1937	821

29	On the Allahabad Students' Strike	20 November	1937	823
30	The Duty of Indian Students in Britain	23 March	1938	825
31	Message to the Canadian Youth Congress	30 April	1938	826

THE QUESTION OF LANGUAGE

32	On the Hindi-Urdu Controversy	6 July	1937	826
33	The Question of Language	25 July	1937	829

MISCELLANEOUS

34	To Lionel Fielden	3 January	1937	845
35	The Role of a Cartoonist	24 February	1937	846
36	To V.K. Krishna Menon	25 March	1937	847
37	To V.K. Krishna Menon	5 April	1937	848
38	To J. Barnes	22 April	1937	849
39	Nationalism and Socialism	7 May	1937	850
40	To Sajjad Zaheer	1 July	1937	851
41	To Ernst Toller	19 July	1937	852
42	To J.A.D. Naoroji	30 August	1937	853
43	To Sushila Prasad	31 August	1937	854
44	To Shyam Sunder Lal	6 September	1937	856
45	To Bharati Sarabhai	30 September	1937	857
46	To Carlos da Cruz	1 October	1937	857
47	To Bhulabhai Desai	1 October	1937	858
48	To Ernest F. Paton	11 November	1937	858
49	On the Role of a Progressive Writer	14 November	1937	859
50	The Problems of the Kisans	19 November	1937	860
51	Lenin	2 January	1938	861
52	To V.K. Krishna Menon	3 February	1938	862
53	To John Maynard	3 February	1938	863
54	To N. R. Malkani	10 February	1938	864
55	To Bharati Sarabhai	10 March	1938	864
56	To P.V. Gadgil	11 March	1938	866
57	To Bhagavan Das	12 March	1938	866
58	To John Gunther	16 March	1938	867

59	To Durgabai Jog	22 March	1938	872
60	To Riaz Mohamad	22 March	1938	872
61	Escape	7 April	1938	873
62	Prison Days	April	1938	876
63	To Krishna Hutheesing	5 May	1938	877
64	A Visit to Garhwal	10 May	1938	879

ILLUSTRATIONS

frontispiece

In Dehra Dun, 19 January 1937
In Delhi, March 1937 *between pp.* 96—97

All India Congress Legislators Convention,
Delhi, March 1937
At Victoria Terminus, Bombay, 14 May 1937 240—241

In the North West Frontier Province, October 1937
With Subhas Bose, Calcutta, 4 November 1937 464—465

Page of The Rashtrapati, 5 October 1937
On the North West Frontier, Torkhan, October 1937 544—545

In Malaya, May 1937
In Pyuntaza, Burma, May 1937 688—689

In Penang, Malaya, 23 May 1937
Addressing a public meeting at Seremban,
Malaya, 29 May 1937 752—753

With Subhas Bose, 1938
With members of the Congress Working Committee
on board the S.S. "El Medina", 2 January 1938 816—817

Delhi March 1937
Victoria Terminus, Bombay, 4 May 1937

In the North West Frontier Province, October 1937
With Subhas Bose, Calcutta, 4 November 1937

Page of The Rashtrapati, 5 October 1937
On the North West Frontier, Torkham, October

[illegible] May 1937
In Pyuntaza, Burma May 1937

In Penang, Malaya, 23 May 1937
Addressing a public meeting at Seremban
Malaya, 29 May 1937

With Subhas Bose, 1938
With members of the Congress Working Committee
on board the S.S. "El Medina", January 1938

1

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

1. Discipline among Congressmen[1]

Allahabad
January 2, 1937

Dear Comrade,

Reports reach our office from time to time to the effect that some Congressmen are opposing official Congress candidates in the provincial elections. Whatever the merits of various candidates might be, once the final decision has been made by the Central Parliamentary Board, there is no room for further discussion. All Congressmen must stand by that decision and any, who deliberately go contrary to it, invite disciplinary action on behalf of the Congress. The mere fact that an individual is personally so anxious to go to the legislature, that he or she is prepared to flout the Congress decision, is the final argument against his candidature. Too great a desire to enter the legislatures, or to have any office, is almost a disqualification for it. And those whom this desire leads to pushing themselves forwards in opposition to the decision of their own organisation, are certainly not desirable candidates.

It was to meet such cases of flagrant indiscipline that the disciplinary rules of the Congress have been recently revised by the Working Committee.[2] Those rules are meant to be acted upon. I want you therefore to report to our office immediately as follows:

1. Names of Congressmen, if any, who are opposing official Congress candidates, with further information as regards their constituencies and the names of our official candidates.
2. What steps has your committee so far taken against these rebel Congressmen or Congresswomen? Has any notice been issued to them to submit their explanation or to show cause why disciplinary action should not be taken against them?
3. What further steps does your committee propose to take against them?

I suggest that, if you have not already taken steps, this should be done immediately. In addition to this, please inform all such rebel

1. Circular to the provincial Congress committees and parliamentary boards. A.I.C.C. File No. E-1/1936, p. 33, N.M.M.L.
2. The rules were revised by the Working Committee at its meeting held in Bombay from 9 to 11 December 1936.

Congressmen that they should submit their explanations direct to our office for my consideration. In the event of the local or provincial executive not taking adequate action in the matter, action will be taken by us. A person who opposes and injures the Congress work cannot continue to have the privilege of calling himself a Congressman.

Please treat this matter as urgent.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. Message to Congress Candidates[1]

I am leaving Allahabad for a lengthy tour in Bihar, U.P. and the Punjab and I shall not be back at headquarters for a long time. Large numbers of letters and telegrams come to me asking me to go to this place or that. I would gladly accede to all these demands but the number of days at our disposal is limited and a day has twenty four hours only. So I must limit my wandering. I trust that friends and comrades will appreciate my difficulty and not press me to do what is beyond my capacity. To all Congress candidates for election I send greetings and good wishes in this New Year. Let them remember that they represent a cause, a principle and an idea. They do not stand on personal grounds but as soldiers of the Congress and of Indian freedom, and it is on that ground alone that they seek the suffrage of our people. Those who believe in that cause must help them and vote for them. Those who are opposed to our principles or do not care for any principles have every right to oppose us. Between them and us there is no common ground; we stand in different ranks, under different flags, owing different allegiances. We shall combat them on these broad grounds of principle and Indian freedom. But there are others who seek to take advantage of the great prestige of the Congress, sail under false colours, and yet oppose the Congress candidates. Those who oppose the Congress in this election are no Congressmen and voters and the public generally must realise this fact.

1. Allahabad, 4 January 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 5 January 1937.

I trust that sympathisers with the Congress will offer their services for the Congress election campaign. Such voluntary services will be welcomed. More particularly on polling days educated workers are needed at each polling booth, for on such occasions there are often mischief-makers present whose chief business is to create trouble. Particular attention should be paid to this matter at an early stage and competent and educated helpers allotted to every polling booth in each constituency. An election campaign is not all meetings and enthusiasm. It requires careful staff work and organisation and all parliamentary boards and candidates should pay special attention to this.

3. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
January 4, 1937

My dear Krishna,
As soon as the Faizpur Congress was over I had to start with this election touring business. I am going to carry on with it without interruption for the next seven weeks. During this period I shall hardly be in Allahabad for a day or two. I shall thus be somewhat out of touch with letters though of course I shall see that important ones reach me. But there might be delay in dealing with them....

I am dictating this in a moving train. I wonder what I shall be like after these seven weeks are over. I am pretty tough but by the end of February I might have to retire to a nursing home for a while.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

4. Greetings to Bihar[1]

Comrades of Bihar,
I come to you after several years. I came to you last, three years ago, at the time of the great earthquake.[2] Since then much has happened and many an earthquake of another kind has come to our people and to me personally. But the old call still rings in our ears and drives us on—the call of Indian freedom and of our suffering masses. The future may hold greater earthquakes for us than in the past, but whatever may befall us, we should carry on till we reach the goal of freedom. Bihar has a proud record and much is expected of Bihar in the future. Let the people of Bihar remember this in the days to come. Let them stand by the Congress and the cause of freedom. In that hope and belief I send them warm greetings and good wishes in the New Year.

1. Statement to the press, Patna, 5 January 1937. *Indian Nation*, 6 January 1937.
2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 186-198.

5. Farewell Message to Bihar[1]

For seven days I sped like an arrow from the bow from place to place in Bihar carrying the message of the Congress wherever I went. During these seven days I travelled from end to end of the province right up to the frontier of Nepal. I met vast audiences of poverty-stricken peasantry in the rural areas; I passed through ancient cities, famous in history and tradition, and modern towns with their industries and commerce and unemployment and railway strikers. Through the steel city of Jamshedpur I went, and across the black coal area of Jharia. Rapidly I passed

1. Given at Ghazipur, 13 January 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 14 January 1937. The first paragraph was reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), p. 99.

through Chota Nagpur with its beautiful forests and its so-called aborigines. Everywhere I found enthusiastic response to the message of the Congress, everywhere love and goodwill beyond measure. I leave the province with regret but I carry back with me the fragrant memory of the generous affection of its people and I shall feel strengthened and invigorated by it in the perils and tasks to come. Men and women of Bihar, dear comrades in a great and glorious enterprise, I wish you good fortune and courage and perseverance.

The Bihar tour was fast and furious but I managed to complete my programme on most days. But on the last day, in Muzaffarpur district, I failed in this and to my very great regret I could not attend the great meeting in Muzaffarpur city where many thousands had long waited for me. The programme was unreasonably heavy, the roads were bad, the vast crowds of kisans bigger than anywhere else; there were innumerable unexpected road halts where people, especially women, had gathered, and the loud-speakers failed to come. I am afraid all this rather bowled me over and I am not quite as fit now as I was ten days ago. In Ballia also the programme was a fantastic one. I must cry halt to these programmes and in future every district programme must be passed by me before it is announced. I have another seven weeks to carry on with this tour and I do not want to end it suddenly because of physical unfitness. I must therefore insist on light and reasonable programmes. From the point of view of our work also it is utterly wrong to have too many functions. One or two big functions are far more important than many small ones.

6. On Foot to the Polls[1]

Wherever I go, I find great enthusiasm for the cause of the Congress. In the elections, enthusiasm and public meetings and demonstrations are good, but more important for any big undertaking is staff work and the careful working out of details. I find that little attention is paid

1. Statement to the press, Fyzabad, 15 January 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 16 January 1937.

to this staff work by our committees. Mostly they concentrate on demonstrations. This is not good enough and the first place should be given to staff work. Some of the best workers in each province should give up touring and sit at headquarters or visit places only for purposes of inspections. Polling day arrangements especially must be fixed up carefully. It must be clearly announced that the Congress cannot make arrangements to carry voters by lorry or motor, nor do we provide food as others do at the polling booths. The cry from us everywhere must be, "On Foot to the Polling Booths". Let this be widely declared and the rural voters should be encouraged to join parties marching together from their villages with the national flag and singing national songs and "On Foot to the Polls".

7. Message to the Punjab[1]

I come to you again by air and land, with an inspiring and strengthening message of freedom. We have a big task, before you and I and all of us in this great land. We have to free our people from exploitation. For the moment we have to face the elections. We have chosen to enter these elections and we shall win.

Therefore, comrades and friends, stand by the Congress, stand by the flag of freedom and away with all the reactionaries to the limbo of forgotten things. Let our success in elections be the prelude to a greater success to come.

1. New Delhi, 16 January 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 17 January 1937.

8. Communalism, Sectarianism and Elections[1]

All those people who talk in terms of Hindu rights and Muslim interests are job hunters, pure and simple, and fight for the loaves and fishes of office. How long are you going to tolerate this nonsense, this absurdity?

The Ghaznavi-Burdwan Pact in Bengal[2] has exposed the pretensions of these supposed opponents of the communal decision. It has conclusively proved that all this opposition to the communal decision was merely a fight for spoils.

It appears the only aim of the opponents of the Award is to get ministerships and government jobs and they are prepared to sell their community for their own petty interests.

India's problem is linked up with the problem of the world and the election business is important inasmuch as it helps us to grasp this problem. But I warn you to beware of minor issues.

There are only two forces in the country, the Congress and the government. Those who are standing midway shall have to choose between the two.

I do not want your vote for me or for any of my friends. To vote against the Congress candidate is to vote for the continuance of British domination.

Elections come and go, but there is no escape from the major problem of India's poverty. Congressmen are going to the legislatures to continue the fight for freedom and oust those who have been weakening our efforts.

I want to make it clear that Congressmen are not entering the legislatures in any spirit of cooperation with the government or for working this constitution. These elections are very important as they help

1. Speech at Ambala, 16 January 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 18 January 1937.
2. Abdul Halim Ghaznavi (1876-1953); a liberal politician of Bengal; member, Indian Legislative Assembly, 1926-45. On 7 January 1937, he and the Maharaja of Burdwan signed an agreement that in Bengal the Communal Award should be accepted subject to revision at the end of ten years; there should also be an equal number of Hindu and Muslim ministers and an equal proportion should also be maintained in the services subject to the reservation of an agreed percentage for members of the European, Anglo-Indian and Christian communities.

in establishing mass contact with the millions of voters and non-voters. It is the Congress alone which is capable of fighting the government.

The opponents of the Congress are bound with each other by a community of interests. Their demands have nothing to do with the masses.

The Congress attitude with regard to the communal decision is quite correct and the attempt of the Hindu Mahasabha to malign the Congress is regrettable.[3]

What is this Burdwan-Ghaznavi Pact? Hindu Mahasabha leaders have blessed it. The Communal Award which has been condemned as most undemocratic and anti-national will remain, and so will remain the separate electorates and the percentage of seats allotted to the respective communities. But there will be equal number of Hindu and Muslim ministers. Could there be anything more palpably selfish than this?

The very nature of this pact confirms the wisdom of the Congress stand on the Award. You are already familiar with its decision in regard to this Award. I appeal to you to strengthen the Congress. I am sanguine that the Congress will come out with flying colours in this election fight. The Congress victory at the polls will necessarily lower the government prestige. It would mean the victory of the Congress principles and ideals.

There has been criticism in the selection of candidates. Congress candidates are its soldiers. They have been allotted a certain task. I am a humble servant of the Congress. They have not selected me as their candidate. Shall I feel myself belittled by it although I am not ashamed of saying that I think I am fit to rule India, nay, the world?

This is no division of spoils. The selection as a Congress candidate is not a matter of great honour. You honour me today because you think I have the courage to stand against foreign exploitation. Above all other qualities that I possess, I am a soldier. It is not worthwhile to fight over these minor matters. There is a gigantic task ahead of us which will try our mettle. We are standing on the top of a volcano. I invite you all to prepare yourselves for that danger.

I am sorry that my name was misused by Lala Deshbandhu Gupta's[4]

3. The president of the Hindu Mahasabha had said on 21 October 1936: "Congress has very few Muslim members and it cannot afford to antagonise them. No doubt this has led the Congress into committing the serious blunder of keeping neutral over the communal decision which was not a communal but a national question."
4. (1900-1951); a leading Congressman of Delhi; imprisoned several times during the freedom struggle; editor of *Tej* from 1923; member, Constituent Assembly, 1946-50.

opponent, Shrimati Lekhawati.[5] She had written to me and I gave her a lengthy reply.[6] I concede that the country's progress depends on women's progress but I have heard it for the first time that a woman wants our support simply because she is a woman. We want brave men and women for our fight. There is no distinction of caste in our ranks. The only criterion is the fitness of the candidate. I am sorry that Shrimati Lekhawati Jain who professed to be a Congresswoman opposed the Congress so bitterly from the very outset. She raised the slogan of Hindu interests and Jain interests. The Congress may lose a thousand seats but it cannot tolerate that any community should come and raise sectarian issues in the elections. Election fever is high today, but I am not without hope that after the elections, Shrimati Lekhawati Jain will feel sorry in her calmer moments for all that she has done.

I again appeal to you to vote for the Congress candidates as a Congress victory will be your own victory.

5. (b. 1908); contested the 1937 election as an independent candidate and was defeated; Deputy Chairman, Punjab Vidhan Sabha, 1964-66; Deputy Speaker, Haryana Vidhan Sabha, 1968.
6. She had taken objection to the decision of the Congress Parliamentary Board over the selection of the candidate for her constituency and requested Jawaharlal to arbitrate. Jawaharlal in his reply stated that as a disciplined Congressman, he had on several occasions "submitted to Congress decisions when I did not agree with some of them" and therefore regretted that he could not interfere in the matter.

9. Farewell Message to the Punjab[1]

Three days I have spent in the Punjab and during this brief period I have visited many cities and many rural areas. Three crowded wonderful days were full of movement and full of most extraordinary enthusiasm. I came with the message of the Congress and vast overpowering

1. Lahore, 18 January 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 20 January 1937.

crowds gathered to listen to it and their very numbers, enthusiasm and spirit were the measures of their response thereto. What a magnificent response it has been and how heartening the feeling that the spirit of communalism wilts and withers and reaction cannot raise its head! Follow this up, friends and comrades of the Punjab, to make the Congress victorious in these elections and in the greater work ahead. We part today but we shall meet again.

10. Make the Congress Stronger[1]

With the passing of each day India is becoming more and more impatient to secure independence for its millions and full control over its own destiny in order to advance towards progress and prosperity in all directions of national activity. It is this unique, powerful and irrepressible urge for freedom which drives, as it were, lakhs of our men and women to such huge gatherings, determined to have their aspirations fulfilled.

Since my last visit to Dehra Dun I have been to several places—to Cape Comorin, to eastern and western India, and to all the provinces. I am now coming from the Punjab where I travelled for three days using even an aeroplane. Everywhere I met lakhs of people assembled in huge gatherings. Why is it so? To some people it may be a *tamasha*, but to the poor villagers and peasants it is certainly no *tamasha*. Behind these huge gatherings there is a powerful force which pushes us forward. Economic hardship, poverty and unemployment are rampant in the land, and the masses are now anxious to find means and ways whereby they can see better and brighter days. There is an impatient and irrepressible desire everywhere to attain freedom.

The conditions in the country have worsened during the last fifteen years or so. We have been fighting to attain freedom for our motherland. We have seen noncooperation and satyagraha movements, but

1. Speech at Dehra Dun, 19 January 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 22 January 1937.

the present desire to achieve Swaraj, now surging everywhere in the country, is much more deep-rooted and powerful. After so much experience of political struggle, we still follow the same old path as there is no other course open to us. That the nation has taken a turn for the better and has lifted its head high, is in itself a hopeful and significant sign of the approach of better days.

Freedom is never achieved by the leaders pressing a button. Great achievements are possible only when the leaders are backed by popular force. When millions of men move towards one objective in complete unity a situation is created which by itself makes freedom possible. Political, economic and social matters are of far-reaching importance and certainly something new by way of an economic organization would come out of it removing our poverty and solving our problems.

The goal of the Congress is panchayat raj wherein all would participate and the people would have the reins of power and administration in their own hands. We have to acquire power; and we can do so only by constant exercise of strength in political struggles. People or nations can develop strength only when they make efforts to become self-reliant. Strength can never be acquired by keeping aloof.

The people should organize Congress committees in *mohallas* and villages and strengthen the Congress organization through those committees. Their hardships can then be expressed and ascertained and a basis found for a uniform policy. Lakhs and crores of people would then know what those problems are which afflict them all. We should not expect life to be easy and soft for those who go to the legislatures. We want these legislatures to be of assistance to us in our fight for Swaraj rather than a hindrance. We should not send to the legislatures such persons who will always support our enemies.

Of a population of 35 crores in the country, only three crores are going to be the voters according to the new constitution. The Congress claims to represent these thirty five crores of people. But it does not want that the three crores of people who have the right to vote should be allowed to be misled by others. There are only two forces in the country, the Congress and the government. Although the British Government declare that they are standing aloof from the election, I have heard about the police threats in this district and their secret activities under the cloak of the electioneering of the other side. But despite all this we are going to the legislatures, not as irresponsible beings or self-appointed attorneys of the people, but as soldiers. While the Congress is bound by its disciplinary rules and you the voters will hold in your hands the leading strings, there are others who are going to the legislatures to seek personal profit. There are some who want to be

ministers. This is not an occasion to put forth claims of relationship or kinship before the electorate. It is a straight fight in which certain principles are at stake. The Congress is the only institution which represents the people and has been fighting for the rights of the people. Those who stand in the middle of the fight between the Congress and the government will be serving no useful purpose.

I am delighted that a lady[2] is contesting the election here. It is through the efforts of men and women that India's salvation can be brought about and it is very essential that both play their part together in the struggle.

I also appeal to you to observe Independence Day on 26 January, and a hartal on 1 April, the day the new constitution is to come into force.

2. Shrimati Sharmada Tyagi (1908-1937); a Congress worker from Dehra Dun; member, U.P. Assembly, 1937.

11. On Mustering of Voters[1]

I understand that in some districts of the United Provinces special arrangements have been made by the Congress candidates to induce voters to go to the polls on the polling day. It has been arranged especially in rural areas. Early in the morning of the polling day at a fixed hour voters should be summoned together by the beating of drums. They would then march together with national flags, singing national songs, to the polling booth and having recorded their votes should march back in order.

I commend this arrangement to the other districts of the United Provinces and to other provinces where voting is yet to take place. They must remember "On Foot to the Polls".

I appeal to the educated young men, students and others, to offer themselves as workers for the polling days.

1. Speech at Meerut, 22 January 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 24 January 1937.

12. To M.M. Malaviya[1]

Allahabad
January 26, 1937

My dear Malaviyaji,

I have been much distressed at the development in connection with your support of Shannodevi[2] and Keshoram[3] and your opposition to the Congress candidates who were opposing these two. On the merits I do feel that you have supported the wrong candidates. On further enquiry I am convinced that Keshoram has a most reactionary record and has been opposing the national cause these many years. The allegation against him of having been present with Dyer in Jallianwalla Bagh is probably incorrect, but the other charges are substantially true. I have considerable evidence to this effect but I will not trouble you with it now.

As regards Shannodevi I found that practically all Congressmen in the Punjab, belonging to both groups, were opposed to her. Even the leading Nationalists in the Punjab were opposed to her. Her tactics in the course of the election have been most unfortunate and reprehensible. She has been opposing Dr. Gopichand's candidature also. Under the circumstances it was quite impossible for the Congress to adopt her, even if there was a constitutional way open for this. And this as I told you was not open to me at this stage. I sent you a long telegram to Banaras but I am afraid you must have missed it.

But merits apart what I am faced with is the clear position that Shannodevi and Keshoram are opposing Congress nominees and you are openly supporting them. What am I to do with this? I am getting large numbers of letters of protest and of enquiry as to what steps we should take in the matter. I do not know what to say in reply. Your general and particular support of many Congress candidates has been of great value to us. Even apart from this the feeling that we have you on our side has been a great consolation to me. But how am I to distinguish between you, with all my regard for you, and others who

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 1/37, National Archives of India.
2. (b. 1902); editor of Hindi daily *Shakti*, 1936-40; as a Nationalist Party candidate was defeated in 1937; member, Punjab Assembly, 1940 and its Deputy Speaker, 1950 and 1962 and Speaker, 1966-67.
3. A Nationalist Party candidate from Amritsar who was defeated in 1937.

have acted similarly? I have no answer to that question and it seems to me that some answer must be given. Hence my distress. As this matter raises a question of considerable personal and general importance I am referring it to the members of the Working Committee for their advice.[4] But I am writing to you to seek your own advice in the matter. I am sure you can view it objectively and, apart from the personal equation, advise me as to what I should do under the circumstances.[5]

With regards,

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. While Maulana Azad wanted disciplinary action to be taken against Malaviya. Bhulabhai Desai suggested that an ultimatum be sent to him. Sardar Patel, Achyut Patwardhan and Shankarrao Deo preferred that the matter be dropped in view of Malaviya's old age and general standing.
5. In his reply of 23 February 1937, Malaviya wrote: "You and your colleagues of the Working Committee will no doubt decide the matter as you will think proper."

13. Renewal of the Independence Pledge[1]

Today, by repeating the independence pledge, we have reiterated our faith in our ability and our resolve to win independence. We must carry on our fight till we have achieved our aim.

We do not want to break any orders at present. But we must note that the government ban[2] is only a shadow of the coming events. It also shows that the strength of the Congress is increasing.

1. Speech at Allahabad, 26 January 1937. From *The Leader*, 28 January 1937.
2. The Independence Day pledge had been banned on 22 January 1937 in severa provinces.

Today, when I went to the villages, I saw heavy police arrangements everywhere. I do not know whether the government has decided to celebrate Independence Day in this manner. But I am struck by the manner in which the new police stations have been constructed in rural areas. Police stations in the villages of Allahabad district present the appearance of forts. Ditches have been dug around and arrangements for drawbridges have been made. Holes have also been made in the walls of the buildings.

You know it well that the Congress election manifesto[3] has clearly laid down a policy for us and whatever we must do must be in keeping with that policy. We shall go to the legislatures not with a view to cooperate with those who have imposed the Act upon us. We shall go there so that we are able to combat the Act and offer resistance to British imperialism which is trying to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people. Above all, we want to use these elections to rally the masses under the Congress standard, to carry the Congress message to the millions of voters and non-voters so that the mass struggle gets further stimulus. I would therefore urge you to vote for the Congress candidates.

I want to refer to the Gorakhpur and Pilibhit outrages.[4] I have a suspicion that these are connected with the election campaign. It has also surprised me very much that the coloured ballot box system has not been introduced in the case of rural constituencies. Such a system is needed in the rural areas as it would greatly facilitate the illiterate voters. What surprises one most is that this system is introduced in the case of Allahabad city constituency but not in the village constituencies. I do not know whether the U.P. Government considers the villagers to be more educated than the people living in cities. This is the only province in the country where the coloured box system has not been introduced for the village voters. In my opinion, this has been done to prevent fair voting.

Some newspapers, including the London *Times*, have expressed an opinion that a large convention, to be attended by the Congress candidates who would be elected to the legislatures and prominent members

3. For the text of the manifesto see *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 459-464.
4. It had been reported that Congress workers had been murdered in these places.

of the All India Congress Committee, would be held after the election and they would constitute the proposed constituent assembly. I however want to repudiate this suggestion.

I also want to refer to Mr. Shyamlal's statements.[5] I want to tell you that the Congress has given no undertaking in connection with the Poona Pact. In fact, no such undertaking could ever be given and the right of the Congress to work for the Harijans cannot be challenged.

In the end, I also want to say that I had nothing to do with the selection of the candidates. The selection was made by the Congress committees and parliamentary boards and it is just a coincidence that my servant Harilal has also been selected. I can, however, say from my personal knowledge that he is a very suitable candidate.

5. A scheduled caste candidate from Allahabad to the provincial assembly; he had contended that though the Poona Pact had stipulated that the Harijans would be allowed to contest elections without interference from any party, the Congress had set up a candidate for the reserved seat.

14. Make the Congress Victory Spectacular[1]

I come before you, one and all, men and women, to deliver the message of the great organization, the Congress. I have been touring the country on election propaganda and asking the people to vote for the Congress candidates. No doubt you will vote for the Congress candidates but the victory must be so spectacular, effective and splendid that the opponents will feel ashamed of their standing against the nation's chosen

1. Speech at Jhansi, 30 January 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 31 January 1937.

representatives. We are not enamoured of the councils, but the past history of the councils reveals that during our absence, such people enter there who betray the nation's cause in the midst of our fight for independence, and side with the government in crushing this fight. If we are able to push out such men from there, it will be by itself a great achievement, let alone our doing any good in the assemblies, which we cannot do under this constitution.

We have been ruined politically and economically. Everyone of us, peasant or petty trader, labourer or small merchant, is going down economically. Our trade has already gone down much. Means of production have been snatched away by a few. Poverty reigns, starvation rules, and I have come to tell you the way to get out of this vicious circle. Freedom is the only remedy for all these ills.

Independence can be attained through a sound organisation and constant struggle with the forces that deny it. It is possible that we may lose once, twice, and ten times, and repression may succeed for a short time; but history shows us that the governments which proved unsuccessful in solving the problems of poverty and starvation had to depart. So, essentially our fight is a fight against poverty and starvation. And we are bound to succeed in stamping out these things if an organised effort is made. Though there are other parties and organisations also in the country, some communal and some non-communal, have they ever dared to stand against the government and made sacrifices for their beliefs? It is the Congress which has fought and sacrificed for its principles. The Congress lives for the masses, thinks for the masses and acts for the masses. In fact it is the living embodiment of the nation's visions, dreams and aspirations. Make it stronger so that it may stand up to the government with renewed strength and win independence.

We are respected in the world today, not because we have become independent, but because we are struggling to become independent; we have cultivated a will, a desire to become free. And for this we should be grateful to the Congress which has produced in us this fibre to stand up to the mighty power. In fact if the Congress goes down then the nation goes down and if the Congress rises higher then rises with it the national honour, the country's prestige and our individual honour as well. In fact there are only two forces in the country, the Congress and the government. We do not want any party which, while hostile forces are pitched against each other, takes a stick in hand and strolls, trying to exchange glances and smiles with both, and finding its position untenable sometimes takes shelter behind communal issues. In fact such parties do not stand for any principles or ideals. The people belonging to them are job-hunters and office-seekers.

15. The Meaning of Complete Independence[1]

Allahabad
2.2.37

Sir,

I have just read your leading article on 'Complete Independence' in your issue of February 2nd.[2] May I venture to say that this article does not contain that clarity of thought and expression which one has a right to expect from *The Bombay Chronicle?* It confuses the issue and tones down the Congress demand for independence and thus is likely to mislead the public. What the Congress demand and objective are can be easily ascertained by reference to the Congress resolutions as well as to the famous Congress independence pledge which was first taken by millions of Indian people on January 26th, 1930. In this pledge it is stated at the end of the first paragraph: "We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence." Could anything be clearer or more unequivocal than this?

I cannot enter into this question at length at present as I am continuously moving about. I have already written on this subject in my books and I would especially draw your attention to my answer to a question put to me in London. This is given at p. 228 of my book, *India and the World.*[3]

Briefly put, the position is that we can have no willing connection with imperialist Britain. We cannot be even partners in an imperialist concern. And so, if Britain continues to be imperialist, we part company, for the very basis of our Congress and freedom movement is anti-imperialism. That does not mean isolation for us. We do not believe in cutting ourselves off from the rest of the world and we shall gladly work for the establishment of world peace and a world order based on political and social freedom. But imperialism is the very negation of both these and so we cannot be parties to it in any form. Hence our

1. Letter to the editor, *The Bombay Chronicle,* published on 11 February 1937.
2. While accepting that the Congress aimed at complete freedom, the article said: "Whether that will mean any connection with the British Empire and, if so, of what kind are questions which will have to be decided, when the struggle for freedom will reach a stage when India will be able to dictate her terms."
3. See *Selected Works,* Vol. 7, p. 91.

demand for complete independence, and neither the shadow nor the substance of this will satisfy us, but only the full article.

Yours etc.,
Jawaharlal Nehru

16. On the U.P. Government's Circular[1]

I have just seen the circular, issued by the chief secretary to the United Provinces Government, directing district officers to take action under section 108 Cr. P.C. against the Congress workers engaged in Congress work, on the ground that they are preaching sedition.[2] The U.P. Government has been conspicuous in India for its open activities against the Congress in connection with elections. Almost alone in India, among provincial governments, it has persisted in refusing to have coloured ballot boxes, a system which ensures secrecy of voting for illiterate voters.

The ministers must be held responsible for this unjust decision which can only be based on the conviction that with secret voting, the Congress is bound to sweep the polls. I have found, during my tour of the United Provinces districts, complaints of official interference and official canvassing for anti-Congress candidates based on reliable data. The officials in many places have practically become agents of the National Agricultural Party.[3]

1. Statement to the press, Lucknow, 5 February 1937. *The Hindustan Times.* 6 February 1937.
2. On 5 February 1937, the U.P. Government issued fresh instructions under section 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code against dissemination of seditious ideas during the election campaign.
3. The National Agricultural Party of Oudh and Agra, formed in 1934, contested the 1937 elections. This party of landlords and zamindars was supported by the U.P. Government.

The open sympathizers and workers of the party are, it is stated, being appointed as polling officers. This is bad enough, at any time, but in view of the absence of secrecy this is an outrageous device. The new circular of the U.P. Government is the culmination point of this set and deliberate policy. It is an astonishing document and the most revealing part is its issue and publication at this juncture on the very eve of election when the election campaign is practically over and voting is going to take place soon.

The object of it at this stage can have little to do with the election campaign. It must be to affect the voting itself. A tremendous and unparalleled response from the public to the Congress message and patent failure of all the devices of its opponents have apparently unnerved the government completely. After visiting every district in U.P. and going deep into rural areas everywhere, I can say definitely and with no doubts or reservations that given fair voting conditions, hundred per cent success in U.P. is certain. Knowledge of this has upset the government and its hangers-on, and hence this circular at this stage. It is evident that the circular aims at widespread action. It says so and, on the very eve of election, can only mean that a determined attempt is being made to interfere with the normal course of elections. Already one sees what is being done.

Five of our principal workers in Dhampur, district Bijnor, have been arrested and other arrests are being threatened. In Cawnpore, there were lathi charges on our election meetings. This state of affairs indicates the extent to which the government has deteriorated. Again, the ministers must share the responsibility for this. The very measure of this deterioration and lapse from all decent standards of public life is the measure of the Congress strength and hold on the masses, which the government supporters fear so much. Whatever happens during the next few days, I trust that Congressmen and the public generally will keep cool and proceed with our programme peacefully and determinedly and on the election day overwhelm our opponents by our organized voting strength, representing the Indian masses and their will to freedom.

People in Bihar have done splendidly.[4] Let us of the U.P. take up this friendly challenge of our sister province and do better, and so, comrades in U.P., on with our work to the triumph of the Congress.

4. In Bihar, the Congress had won 98 out of 152 seats in the assembly.

17. Message to the Voters of U.P.[1]

I have completed my tour of the districts of the United Provinces, and now I proceed to Maharashtra and Karnataka. I have visited nearly all the 48 districts of my province during the past weeks and months and I return full of joy and confidence at the wonderful enthusiasm of our people.

The name of the Congress is a magic both in the town and village. It has become the shelter and hope for our millions. All the embattled legions of our rulers and of vested interests cannot keep those millions down any longer. They are weary of the long night. They smell the breath of the dawn and so under the sheltering and inspiring banner of the Congress, we march forward to triumph.

For the present, we have to face the elections. Tomorrow and the day after the voters will march to the polling booths. Let every voter, man or woman, do his or her duty to the country and vote for the Congress. Thus we shall write in millions of hands our flaming resolve to be free.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 6 February 1937. *The Hindustan Times,* 7 February 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India,* (Allahabad, 1938), p. 100.

18. The Significance of the Election Campaign[1]

Everywhere the Congress election issue looms large before the eyes of the people and it is, therefore, necessary to understand the significance of this campaign. Why has the Congress taken up this activity with so much enthusiasm and energy? Not because India is going to win Swaraj through these assemblies and councils. That could never happen.

1. Speech at Bombay, 9 February 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle,* 10 February 1937.

It is for the purpose of strengthening the national movement and for the sake of the only vital question that awaits a solution at the hands of the people. The poverty of the people and their ever-increasing misery are the questions which await a definite solution that cannot be put off.

There can be only two forces in the country, one representing the Indian National Congress, and the other, the government.

So long as you do not realise the important principles involved in the Congress programme of capturing the legislatures, you will not be able to understand the real meaning and significance of these elections. These elections are not intended to send inside the legislatures people who would adorn ministerial *gaddis*. I therefore want you all to take a broom and sweep the government's yes-men off the councils.

The issue before us is very clear. If once the importance of elections is realised everyone would automatically consider it his duty to support the Congress without hesitation. It is encouraging to hear of the successes of the Congress in Bihar and other provinces. The effect of such good news is heartening and other provinces should take the lead.

The Congress has once again proved that it enjoys the loyalty of the peasants as it has always supported the cause of the peasants. All the kisan sanghs in the country are welcome to join the Congress for they must not forget that India is predominantly a land of the peasants.

In the fight for national independence all must join, for one section of the people alone cannot carry it on. The Congress therefore must win the elections. Do not pay any heed to the so-called independents. Those who are not Congress candidates must not be supported. The growth of the Congress is the main thing. It must gain strength. Round it hinges our future. It is an army which needs men of courage. It must have discipline. This is no time to criticise the Congress. It is the real protector of all Indian interests. Whoever works against it in the name of labour is doing a disservice to the working class. On account of some petty quarrels, the trade union leaders are opposing the Congress.[2] They have thought it fit to put up a candidate in the labour constituency of the city in opposition to the Congress candidate. Though the Congress attempted to accommodate the Trade Union Congress, nothing has come of it. The major issue facing us should not be forgotten.

2. K.N. Joglekar, S.A. Dange and other trade union leaders had opposed the Congress candidate.

The present attitude of the Trade Union Congress will harm not only the cause of the workers but the national movement itself. Is it the desire of the Trade Union Congress to keep away the workers from playing their legitimate part in the fight for freedom? It is deplorable that the Trade Union Congress should go to the length of joining hands with the rivals of the Congress candidate. Let them remember that today there is no issue before the country except the question of independence. And if they remember this, they should alter their attitude towards the Congress. It is wrong to suppose that the Congress is against the working class movement. The very purpose for which we have joined this struggle is to get bread to the starving, clothes to the ill-clad, shelter to the homeless, work for the unemployed and a better standard of living for all. I, as an ex-president of the Trade Union Congress,[3] have the welfare of the workers at heart. I hope the Trade Union Congress will not do anything to cause disruption among the nationalist forces in the country but will help to consolidate them and strengthen the fight for freedom.

It is a pity that much time and energy are being wasted on petty squabbles. The Congress alone has taken upon its shoulders the heavy responsibility of expressing the will of the nation. No other party in the country has the courage to do it or would ever dare do it.

At this critical juncture, it is the duty of every Indian to stand by the Congress brushing aside all other considerations.

The communalists among the Hindus and the Muslims are quarrelling over the loaves and fishes of office. But the people at large are gradually able to see what lies behind the cloak of communalism and are rallying round the banner of the Congress.

In certain sections of the press a report of a secret pact between the Congress and Mr. Jinnah regarding the acceptance of office by the Congress has appeared. It is a false and malicious report. It would be a grievous mistake if the Congress accepts office, after the nation has spoken its mind in the manner it is doing in province after province. We should remember the issue on which we have approached the electors and they are giving their verdict. Then, how on earth can I sign a pact with Mr. Jinnah whom I have seen only once during the last five years and that too only for five minutes at a students meeting in Allahabad?

3. Jawaharlal was president of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1929-30.

I regret that Mr. Jinnah should call the Congress Muslims "adventurers".[4] I most emphatically protest against such a description. The Congress Muslims in the North West Frontier Province and other provinces cannot be called so and their suffering and sacrifice have evoked admiration from the entire country. After all, what does Mr. Jinnah know of the national movement when he has not cared to take part in it even once?

There are Muslims in the Congress who can provide inspiration to a thousand Jinnahs. Let not Mr. Jinnah pour ridicule on the Muslims in the Congress. What does he know of their steadfastness, their patriotism, their struggle, their heroism and their sacrifices? Mr. Jinnah does not understand our demand for independence that has shaken this mighty government. I challenge Mr. Jinnah to show whether there is any other party or organisation in India than the Congress which has given such a consistent fight to the government with a view to alleviating the lot of the poor, hungry and unemployed. Not only Britain but the entire world cannot resist India's demand if but a quarter of India resolves to assert the claim for independence.

Mr. Jinnah speaks in sarcastic terms about independence.[5] He does not realise that the course of events in the world and the very spirit of the times are going to work for India's freedom. I am sorry to see the way Mr. Jinnah's mind works. He does not understand the significance and the real spirit of national independence. Mr. Jinnah may prefer "responsible government",[6] but, I, for one, would not agree to join such a party in preference to the Congress which stands for national independence. As for the achievements of Mr. Jinnah's party, I shall not say a word.

I am sorry that the Congress did not set up more Muslim candidates. In the United Provinces, I found a large number of Muslim voters asking me in whose favour they should exercise their franchise in the absence of Congress candidates. The voters of the U.P., whether they were Hindus or Muslims, were all anxious to vote for the Congress.

4. Jinnah in his reply of 19 January 1937 to Jawaharlal's statement of 10 January 1937 had said: "The League does not believe in assuming a non-communal label, with a few adventurers or credulous persons belonging to other communities thrown in and who have no backing of their people."
5. In his statement of 19 January Jinnah had said: "Does it lie in his (Jawaharlal's) mouth to parade so much that he stands for complete independence of India, which when it suits him becomes the substance of independence?"
6. Jinnah in the same statement had also said: "I stand for a free democratic responsible government for the people of India."

In the end, I would appeal to you all to vote for the Congress candidates.

19. Message to the Nation[1]

My message to the country is: "Vote for the Congress and pack up your knapsack for the march to Swaraj".

1. Bombay, 10 February 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 11 February 1937.

20. Appeal to Kerala[1]

I am sorry that I cannot give any time to your beautiful province now. I hope that some time later on, I may be able to come again. You know that at the present moment, I am touring about more or less in connection with the elections that are going on, asking the people to vote for those candidates that the Congress has set up. I trust that you will also vote for the Congress candidates and thus ensure Congress success in this election. This is not a matter of individuals getting in or individuals getting out; it is a matter of an organised army going in under the banner of the Congress. Therefore, it is improper for individuals who stand on their own to call themselves Congressmen or others; because, if they do so and oppose the official Congress candidates, they do an injury to the Congress cause and the Congress name. I hope, therefore, that here in this province of Kerala, the Congress will triumph as it has triumphed elsewhere. I hope that the Congress candidates will win here in the same overwhelming way in which they are winning today in the United Provinces.

1. Speech at Cannanore, 10 February 1937. *The Hindu*, 11 February 1937.

21. On the Electoral Success in U.P.[1]

Comrades of the United Provinces! I send you my greetings from far Karnataka. I join in your triumph.[2] We have won overwhelmingly in the elections as we knew we would.[3] But who has won? Not our candidates in their individual capacities; not even we workers and soldiers of the Congress who have toiled and laboured for this success; it is the great organisation which has nurtured us and lighted the spark of hope in the hearts of our suffering millions; even more it is those masses themselves who have triumphed despite all the pressure and threats and violence and inducements that were offered to them.

From all accounts it was a fine and inspiring sight to see orderly processions of our village folk marching long distances with our national flag to the polling booths and voting *en bloc* for the Congress candidates. They listened to our call, heard the message of the Congress and responded to it in a magnificent measure. The United Provinces, as other parts of India, stands thus for the complete rejection of the new constitution and for a fight to put an end to it and build a fresh one on the basis of a constituent assembly. But above all the masses have voted for the Congress because they felt that the Congress stood for their interests, worked for them and was their representative.

Let us remember this fact always and keep true to our mass moorings. Only that will bring us ultimate success and redeem our pledge to our people. Anything else will be a betrayal of our cause and of the hopes that have been roused in our millions.

The lesson of the election for us in the U.P., in Bihar and elsewhere is that wherever we have gone straight to the masses and spoken the clear and simple language that they understand they have gladly and

1. Message given at Hubli, 13 February 1937. *The Hindu*, 14 February 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 100-102.
2. In U.P., the Congress had won 134 out of 228 seats in the legislative assembly.
3. Over 54% of the total electorate went to the polls and out of 1,585 seats in the provincial assemblies, the Congress won 711. In five provinces, Madras, the Central Provinces, the United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa, it obtained absolute majorities. The Congress was the single biggest party in four provinces: Bombay, Bengal, Assam and N.W.F.P. In the assemblies of Sind and the Punjab the Congress was in a comparatively smaller minority.

whole-heartedly thrown their weight in our favour. Where we have weakened and compromised, our success has been more partial. Our best and strongest candidates have been the Congress workers with no personal influence or resources and so let us be humble before this victory and realise that the credit goes to the masses.

The people of the U.P. and Bihar and other parts of India have given notice to British imperialism in India to quit. I am confident that Bombay and Gujarat and Maharashtra and Karnataka will follow suit and deliver the same emphatic notice.[4]

The days of imperialism are numbered. The people have spoken and pronounced its doom. It is for us to follow this up and link ourselves still further with the masses. The elections will be over soon; but the great work we are pledged to still remains. To that we have now to address ourselves. With full confidence we march to this final triumph.

4. In Bombay the Congress won 86 out of 175 seats in the lower house.

22. Message to South and West India[1]

I go back to the north at the end of my long journeying. I go back to prepare the Congress pilgrimage to Swaraj of which this has been but a step.

I brought the message of the Congress to the south and the west. But you have heard now that message, not only through my feeble voice, but from the numberless millions of the north who have rallied to the Congress call and their thundering cry for freedom reverberates through the broad plains and valleys of Hindustan.

What echo does that find in your hearts? Does not your blood quicken in your veins at the heartening cry of the masses?

1. Belapur, 16 February 1937. *The Hindu*, 16 February 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 102-103.

India awaits your own brave response and knows full well what it will be.

Away with reaction and the enemies of freedom. Line up! Line up! And let us all march together to Swaraj.

Who dares to ignore this call?

23. To Agatha Harrison[1]

Allahabad
February 22, 1937

Dear Agatha,

You will forgive me, I hope, for not having written to you before your departure. I sent you a telegram on the 16th January to Bombay. But, as you did not sail on that day, I suppose it never reached you. Later I met Carl Heath during a hurried visit to Allahabad and he told me that you had not gone. Your letter came subsequently.

It has almost been physically impossible for me to do any writing as I have been continuously on the move. I suppose I have created some records in the way of political tours during these last few months. The surprising thing is that I have survived them in a fairly good condition.

The elections are over resulting, as you know, in great Congress victories. And this in spite of the pressure and devices of the government, ministers, big landholders and the like. But for these we would have had an even bigger victory. And now to the next job. Soon I am going to Wardha for a Working Committee meeting and next we have the A.I.C.C. meeting and convention[2] in Delhi.

Indira will be coming here, I hope, early in April, and perhaps I may be able to steal a short holiday with her. I have suggested to her to come by air. She objects to travelling by Mussolini's ocean liners, nor

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. As decided at the Faizpur Congress, a convention of A.I.C.C. members and the Congress legislators elected to the central and provincial legislatures was held in Delhi on 19-20 March 1937. This followed the A.I.C.C. meeting held on 17-18 March 1937. For Jawaharlal's address at the convention, see *post*, section 2, item 12.

is she enamoured of the P. & O. She suggested going by the French boat to Colombo but this was too lengthy and complicated a journey.

My mother's health has been bad. She had a mild attack of paralysis a month ago and since then she has been bed-ridden. I want, therefore, Indira to come here as early as possible and so I have suggested her travelling by air in spite of the considerable expense.

I should very much like to go to Europe next autumn but it seems difficult.

With all good wishes,

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

24. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
February 22, 1937

My dear Krishna,

I have now returned from my tours which covered a great part of this enormous country. During these past few months I have travelled tens of thousands of miles and addressed thousands of meetings. All this has been a wonderful experience for me. The surprising thing is that I have got through it in fairly good condition. The election results have been good. I was quite convinced that they could not be otherwise. The only doubtful factor was what might be the effect of pressure, threats and trickery on the part of the government, ministers, big landholders and the like. On the whole we survived all these because of the tremendous mass enthusiasm that was created.

I am writing today to Stafford Cripps and I enclose a copy of my letter to him as this might interest you.[2]

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See the succeeding item.

We have now to face this ministry business which the A.I.C.C. will have to decide within a month and later the convention. I gather from your letter that you have written to me about the convention. I have not received this yet. I should like to have your ideas as to what should be done at the convention.[3]

You have written to me about the difficulties that arise occasionally regarding the Congress representation at functions in England. I do not think it is desirable for any formal action to be taken just yet. I do not like your idea of the Congress President appointing a foreign deputy. I think the present informal arrangement might continue. We shall see about it later.

Very vaguely I am thinking of going to Europe next autumn with Indira but I doubt if I shall be able to do so as both the time and the money will be lacking. Yet I do think that a visit from me will serve a useful purpose. Such a visit is only possible by air to save time and that is an expensive business.

Indira is likely to come here early in April. My mother's health is causing me anxiety and I want Indira to be here as soon as she can. For this reason I have suggested to her to come by air, K.L.M., as soon as her examination is over.

Neither our office nor I have heard at all from the *R.U.P.*[4] You will remember that I wrote to them a long letter in December before the Congress, a copy of which I sent you.[5] They have not even acknowledged this so far as I know. This is surprising. Will you find out from them if they have received the letter and what they propose to do about it?

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. In his letter of 23 January 1937 Krishna Menon said that the convention's main task should be to provide for the consolidation and discipline in the party and press for a constituent assembly for framing the constitution of India.
4. *Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix* (World Peace Congress).
5. This letter is not available.

25. To Sir Stafford Cripps[1]

Allahabad
22 February, 1937

My dear Cripps,
I have long wished to write to you to congratulate you on the joint front of left-wing elements in Britain that you have succeeded in bringing about.[2] This was pleasing news and I felt that it was laying the foundation of bigger things to come. I could not write however because I was continuously moving about, often in remote parts of the country, addressing enormous audiences everywhere, chiefly in connection with our elections.

To give you some idea of the amount of travelling I have done during the last eight or nine months, and specially during the last three months, I might mention that I have probably covered over fifty thousand miles by railway train, motor car and aeroplane. I have addressed literally thousands of meetings and I imagine that in this way I have come into direct contact with ten million people. Apart from these huge audiences I have met vast numbers of others on the roadsides as I motored through rural areas. The enthusiasm everywhere was astounding.

You must have heard of the Congress victory at elections here. That victory is big enough but to grasp the real significance of it you must remember what we were contending against. We had the government apparatus and all the other vested interests against us and all means, fair and otherwise, were employed to defeat us. But the enthusiasm for the Congress was so tremendous that it swept everything before it. Our majorities have been enormous.

Remarkable as this election victory has been, the really significant feature of the election campaign has been the shaking up of the masses. We carried our message not only to the thirty million and odd voters but to the hundreds of thousands of non-voters also. The whole campaign and the election itself have been a revelation of the widespread anti-imperialist spirit prevailing throughout the country. It has also made clearer the class cleavages among the people. The big landlord class and

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. A united front of the Socialist League headed by Cripps, the Independent Labour Party and the communists was formed in Britain to oppose the Conservative government.

other vested interests were ranged against us. They were swept away in the Congress flood[3], their most determined opponents being their own tenants.

This class cleavage is very apparent in the comparison between the elections for the provincial assemblies (lower houses) and the provincial councils (upper houses). In the former the franchise was low and the electorates were large, the average constituency having as many as forty to sixty thousand voters. In the latter the franchise was a high property one and the electorate was very small, usually some hundreds. In the assembly elections we carried all before us and our majorities were prodigious, varying, as a rule, between twenty thousand and fifty thousand. In the council elections we fared badly though even here we won a few seats.[4] The election made it perfectly clear that the wider the mass appeal, the greater was our success. With the present electorate of about ten per cent of the population (for the lower house) we have gained ninety per cent of the seats in the general constituencies. We could have won 100% of these seats but for the tremendous pressure of vested interests, and sometimes the questionable tactics employed against us. If this is any indication of the Congress strength, as it undoubtedly is, then our position is even stronger so far as 90% of non-voters are concerned. Only a microscopic handful at the top, fearful of social changes, might be said to be against us and to cling to the present dispensation, though even they are critical of it.

This applies to the general constituencies. It does not apply so far to the Muslim special electorate and we have not succeeded in regard to Muslim candidates.[5] Partly this is due to our own timidity as we ran few Muslim candidates. The burden of running over a thousand candidates was great and we did not wish to add to it. If we had run more Muslim candidates, I think we would have had a fair measure of success, especially in the rural areas.

But it is true that the Muslim masses are more apathetic. They have been too long doped with communal cries. They have no leaders of

3. Of the 564 candidates for the 228 seats in the United Provinces, 152 were from the National Agricultural Party as against 168 Congressmen and 36 Muslim Leaguers. The National Agricultural Party won 21 seats, the Congress 134 and the Muslim League 27.
4. Of the 229 seats in the six provinces, the Congress had won 64 out of the 92 seats contested by it.
5. The total number of Muslim seats in the assemblies of the 11 provinces was 482. The Congress contested 58 seats and won 26. In N.W.F.P. the Congress had won 15 out of 29 seats.

their own and they are a little hesitant in casting their lot completely with the others. Still it is obvious that even these Muslim masses are getting out of the rut of communalism and are thinking along economic lines. Equally significant is the change that is coming over the younger generation of Muslims. These young people are definitely cutting themselves away from the old communal ways of thought. On the whole, I think that the communal position is definitely brighter. The Hindu communalists have been largely swept away by the Congress and they count for little.[6] The Muslim communal leaders still function but their position weakens for they have no reply to the questions about poverty and hunger and unemployment and independence that their own people put to them. They can think only in terms of jobs for the upper classes.

As a whole, India is wide-awake and expectant. It talks and thinks in terms of the poverty of the masses and how to relieve it, and inevitably it is being driven to a radical solution of our social problems. Politically the masses are wholly anti-imperialist, so also the middle classes, except the top fringe. My extensive touring has been a revelation to me of the suppressed energy of the people and of their passionate desire to be rid of their burdens. The Congress is supreme today so far as the masses and the lower middle classes are concerned. Even the Muslim masses look up to it for relief. It has hardly ever been in such a strong position.

The future is a little uncertain. Within a month the All India Congress Committee will meet to consider the situation and lay down our future plan of action. This will be followed immediately by a convention of all Congress members who have been elected to the legislatures. This convention is of course not the constituent assembly which we have demanded. It is meant to discipline our members and to keep before them the three principal items of our programme: fight the Government of India Act, hinder the federation from coming or functioning, and work for the constituent assembly. This convention will consist of over a thousand members.

When I say that the future is uncertain I refer to our immediate plan of action. So far as our general policy is concerned there is no uncertainty or indecision about it.

6. The Hindu Mahasabha had won only two seats in the Bengal Assembly and one in the Bengal Council. It had won one seat in the Central Provinces Assembly and four seats in the Sind Assembly. One seat was won by the Congress Nationalist Party in the Punjab Assembly and one seat in the Bombay Assembly.

So much about India but do not imagine that I am engrossed with our own problems to the exclusion of those of the outside world. For me this Indian problem can only be looked at in relation to the world situation and I try to follow events and developments in Europe and elsewhere. But I have written a long enough letter and I shall not inflict any more of my thoughts on you.

I am sorry I could not send Mellor[7] an article for the *Tribune*. But it was not possible for me to write anything during my tours. Even now I have to face a good deal of arrears of work. If you think it worthwhile you can give extracts from this letter in the *Tribune*.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

7. William Mellor (1888-1942); editor of the *Tribune*, 1937-38, the newspaper founded by Stafford Cripps and Aneurin Bevan.

26. To Govind D. Madgavkar[1]

Allahabad
24.2.37

Dear Sir Govind Madgavkar,[2]
Your questions are interesting.[3] It is a little difficult to deal with them briefly as my approach to such matters is different. I do not think in terms of a Hindu group or a Muslim group in politics or economics. Therefore I do not quite understand what Hindu unity means or Muslim unity except perhaps in a cultural sense. A vital problem in our provinces is the land problem. The question of Hindu or Muslim unity here does not arise. The big taluqdars, be they Hindus or Muslims, are on one side, their tenants on the other. The terms socialism, democracy, fascism etc., represent certain ideologies and certain forms of political and social structure. Without our trying to understand political

1. Maharashtra Government (D.I.G., C.I.D.) records, File No. 3590/H/II.
2. A retired judge of the Bombay High Court.
3. He had asked among other questions whether Swaraj was possible without Hindu-Muslim unity.

and social problems we fight in the dark not even knowing our objectives. Strength comes from understanding and clarity of thought. Without that, action is blind.

As regards your question No. 6 I am entirely with you in your answer.[4]

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. He had doubted whether any progress was possible, "as long as our life and our actions are dictated, not by the practical and the scientific spirit of the probable results of our actions in the present and the future, but rather by pronouncements made in the past however sacrosanct."

27. On the Victimisation of Students[1]

On account of my touring about continuously for many months I have been unable to keep pace with happenings and have often missed important news. It is only now that these reach me and sometimes surprise me. I find that the student world in this province is deeply stirred at some of these events which have affected them intimately. There have been friction and trouble and strikes in many places, notably Shahjahanpur, Fyzabad and Cawnpore. Orders under sec. 144 and other sections of the Criminal Procedure Code were issued in some places prohibiting students from going near the polling booths on the election day. In Fyzabad I understand that 18 students were arrested and susbsequently released on bail. Students were also fined in Fyzabad for attending a meeting addressed by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. But the most shocking instance comes from Shahjahanpur where, I am informed, a student of the mission school was publicly caned apparently for attending a meeting addressed by me. This student subsequently, it is stated, committed suicide. A student's suicide is alleged to have occurred in Lucknow also recently.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 24 February 1937. *The Leader*, 26 February 1937.

I am shocked at the barbarity of a public caning of a boy by a person whose business is to teach and train him. And for what crime! Canings and suicides—are our schools reduced to this? This is a serious matter and however much we might be engaged in big issues we cannot permit these barbarities to pass unnoticed. It is not only the individual concerned, or the particular school, but the whole educational machinery and policy of the province that is on its trial and the very least that must be done is an impartial public enquiry.

This victimisation and punishment of students raises an important question of principle. Are our students to be prevented from taking part in the ordinary normal public activities because an authoritarian system of education so decrees? Everywhere senior students are encouraged to do so in order to fit them for the problems of life. Many such students are themselves voters and as such bound as a matter of civic duty to take part in elections. Are our students made of different stuff than others? Does our educational system aim at producing robots and helpless human beings who can only obey orders? We have had enough of this. It is time to change.

For the moment the caning of a tender Indian boy fills my mind. The shame and humiliation of it led that sensitive boy to suicide. The horror and tragedy of it! We must have an enquiry. We owe it to him who has died; we owe it still more to others like him who face similar problems and similar humiliation.

28. To N.G. Ranga[1]

Allahabad
5-3-1937

My dear Ranga,

I have your long letter of February 26th.[2] So far I know nothing about this matter except scraps that I saw in the press during my election

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-3(i)/1937, pp. 371-372, N.M.M.L.
2. Ranga had said that the Andhra Provincial Ryots Association, fearing that the peasants' interests might not be safeguarded by the candidates approved by the Congress, had issued a separate pledge in January 1937 to be taken by Congress candidates.

tour. I think that there must have been a great deal of misunderstanding on the subject and I am very sorry to see that a controversy has started about peasants' rights. As a member of a peasant association you have every right to press forward demands on behalf of the peasantry just as a trade unionist can press forward demands on behalf of the workers which go a little beyond the Congress demands. Of course, such demands should not be in conflict with the Congress demands. I think however that it was not a very wise move on your part to issue a kind of a pledge and ask candidates to take it. You know that this could also have been done by trade union leaders. But they refrained from doing so and rightly. The question of taking pledges other than the Congress pledge by a Congress candidate produces confusion and you yourself would have been put in a difficulty if some had taken this pledge and some had not. The right way was to appeal to candidates and others to keep in view peasants' rights and to work for them in so far as they could, subject of course to the Congress policy and Congress discipline. This would have served your purpose and would have been perfectly correct procedure. Your issuing another pledge must have given rise to a misunderstanding in the minds of many people and especially of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.[3] I have not myself discussed this matter with Sardar Patel or seen all the papers, but I am quite sure that much of this controversy would not have arisen except for gross misunderstanding on the part of several people. I do not think that any question of disciplinary action arises. I am glad that you do not insist on your pledge. Unfortunately, this question of peasants' rights and workers' rights raises suspicion in some people's minds and small things appear big to them. We have to keep this matter in view while proceeding with our work among the peasantry and try to win over to our side those who would undoubtedly be with us but for suspicion.

We are playing with great forces and we have to remember this fact; they are greater than our individual selves and even our organisations. Observe the great mass upheaval in Bihar and the U.P. during these elections. There were peasant organisations in some parts of the provinces but essentially the upheaval was a much vaster thing than any small organisation could have brought about. The problem before us is to understand these great forces and harness them.

3. Ranga regretted that Vallabhbhai Patel had called for disciplinary action to be taken against him without prior request for withdrawal of the pledge.

I do not think it will serve any useful purpose for us to carry on this controversy about your having issued a pledge in Andhra.[4] The matter has ended. We have other work to do now. Personally you know that I was much impressed by the ryots' organisations in Andhra. I think they have a great future before them but it would be unfortunate and injurious to all concerned if the impression got abroad that the peasants' organisation was in conflict with the Congress.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. He had the pledge withdrawn in the "general interests of Congress".

29. To Mohan Chandra Mohanta[1]

Allahabad
March 9, 1937

Dear Comrade,[2]
Your letter. I agree with you that communal cries should not be encouraged. But *Bande Mataram* has too long been associated with our national movement for it to have any communal significance. Slogans cannot be imposed from above. They have to grow.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5 (KW)(i)/1937, p. 508, N.M.M.L.
2. Secretary, Jorhat District Congress Committee; had written that *Bande Mataram* was no longer a national slogan as its adoption by the Hindu Mahasabha had turned it into a communal slogan.

30. The Congress and the Muslims[1]

You want me to devise means to draw in more Muslims into the struggle. I can do so only after having talks with the Muslims. Meanwhile you may ask me any question on the points on which you want satisfaction. You know how the leaders of every community, for their own benefit and for other reasons, have been creating misunderstandings in connection with the last elections to the legislatures. Poverty, hunger, disease and destitution afflict Hindus and Muslims alike. I wonder why the Congress, which is fighting for the cause of the country irrespective of any caste or creed, should be held responsible for the present state of affairs. The best course for Hindu-Muslim *rapprochement*, in my opinion, is to work among the Muslim masses whose vital problems are identical with those of others.

It is not true that the Muslims have deserted the Congress. The best among them are in the Congress. In the Frontier, the Pathans form the strength of the Congress. The present strained relations between the Hindus and the Muslims are not due to religious or other reasons but due to the activities of certain interested parties. When Mr. Jinnah dubbed the Congress Muslims as self-seekers, I replied that the Congress Muslims have done better work than Mr. Jinnah. I have never said that the Congress belongs to one community. The Congress is a fighting force in the country representing Hindus and Muslims and all other communities alike.

1. Talk to Muslims at Sarai Aghamir, Lucknow, in reply to a welcome address, 11 March 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 12 March 1937.

31. On the Prohibitory Orders in Calcutta[1]

I have just seen that the police commissioner of Calcutta has issued prohibitory orders against meetings, processions and organising hartals in the Calcutta area.[2] He says that he has done this because the secretary of the Congress Socialist Party has issued a militant appeal for the hartal.

What this particular appeal is I do not know but the police commissioner should know that the hartal for 1 April has been organised under the directions of the Indian National Congress and is a perfectly peaceful and even legal way of protesting against the new constitution. His interference is significant in showing that this constitution in no way affects the police raj under which we live, especially in Bengal. The order continues by whatever name we call it and it is this old order that we combat and seek to end. The reaction of the people to the new constitution becomes still more obvious, when the heavy hand of the police comes down to prevent us from giving peaceful and constitutional expression to it.

I hope that the people of Calcutta will express their resentment of this flagrant denial of civil liberties and the first of April will witness their peaceful but determined resolve to end this constitution and march in line with the Congress to our goal of freedom.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 27 March 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 29 March 1937.
2. They had been prohibited from 29 March to 4 April 1937.

32. To Ramananda Teertha[1]

Allahabad
9-4-1937

Dear Teertha,[2]
You are mistaken if you think that I do not refer to the suppression of the Harijans by caste Hindus. I have written about it on many occasions and I am quite convinced that every kind of social suppression and barrier must go in a free India. Perhaps you know that in north India this question is not very acute. During my tours in the south I have laid considerable stress on it.

So far as I am concerned, all these problems appear to me as one big whole—the ending of all social, political and economic exploitation of man by man, or class by class, or nation by nation. That leads me to socialism. No socialist can tolerate untouchability and the like.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

1. Maharashtra Government (D.I.G., C.I.D.) records, File No. 3590/H/II.
2. (1903-1972); a leading Congressman of Hyderabad; had organised the Hyderabad State Congress in 1938; suffered imprisonment several times for leading the struggle against the Nizam's government.

33. The Election Tour[1]

I have read Mahmud-uz-Zafar's[2] narrative of part of my election tour last year with interest. This was natural for I was the principal actor in this performance and the story brought back to me many an incident, and a succession of pictures passed through my mind. I was also

1. Foreword written at Allahabad, 14 April 1938. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. S. Mahmud-uz-Zafar Khan worked as a secretary to Jawaharlal during the period of the election campaign in 1937; he later joined the Communist Party.

interested in the reactions produced in the mind of a person for whom all this was new—these great crowds in towns and villages, this surging enthusiasm, those millions of eyes out of which India looked at us, sad eyes but with a glimmer of hope in them. For Mahmud-uz-Zafar was almost new to Indian politics, having spent many years abroad, and looked at this changing scene with a fresh mind. I had grown used for many years to Indian crowds, my mind was jaded, and almost I took everything for granted. This narrative itself deals with only a small part of the tours I have undertaken.

Reading this story, I felt sometimes that the author had misunderstood the significance of something or given wrong emphasis to something else. I did not agree with some of his impressions and criticisms. He was new to the Congress and not fully cognizant of its background and past record. But it does not matter much whether we agree or disagree. The impact of a fresh and intelligent mind on the problems that we have to face is always interesting and helpful. I wish, however, that I had not figured so largely in this narrative. I was just a pilgrim going from place to place, and the real people who counted and will count in the future were the masses of India.

34. A Note on the Tour[1]

The President of the National Congress has to undertake a considerable amount of touring. India is a large country, but the difficulty in the way of touring is not so much the largeness of the country as the absence of good roads in a great part of rural India. And yet it is this rural India that demands attention and even clamours for it. The general elections all over India necessitated more extensive and intensive touring than usual, and most of this was done in the three months prior to the elections in February 1937. The actual number of touring days prior to the elections was 130 and during this period about 50,000 miles

1. This undated note was written by Jawaharlal evidently after his Malaya tour in June 1937. *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 97-98.

were covered—about 26,000 miles by railway, 22,500 by road (chiefly by car) and 1,600 by air. The means of transport varied greatly. They included aeroplanes, railway (usually third class travelling, sometimes second class, and on two occasions special trains for short distances); motor cars (from a Rolls Royce to a fifteen year old Ford); motor lorry; horse carriage, tonga, *ekka,* bullock cart, bicycle, elephant, camel, horse, steamer, paddle-boat, canoe, and on foot.

The Congress provinces visited were: Bombay, Punjab, Sind, Delhi, United Provinces, Andhra, Tamil Nad, Nagpur, Mahakoshal and Maharashtra. Calcutta was also visited, but not other parts of Bengal. Kerala (Malabar) was just touched at Cannanore. This leaves only Gujarat, N.W.F. Province, Assam and parts of central India and Rajputana which were not visited.

Most of the touring was done in rural areas and apart from the meetings which had been arranged, there were innumerable impromptu gatherings by the roadside. During a day as many as a dozen meetings might be held, some of them having audiences of thirty thousand or more. Some mammoth gatherings approached a hundred thousand. A meeting of five thousand was considered a small affair. The daily total of persons attending was frequently 100,000, sometimes it was much greater. On a rough and conservative estimate, it can be said that ten million persons actually attended the meetings I addressed, and probably several million more were brought into some kind of touch with me during my journeying by road. These vast audiences usually had a large proportion of women.

These figures do not include the attendance at the Faizpur Congress, nor do they include the tours (such as those to Burma and Malaya) subsequent to February 1937.

These intensive tours called for a great deal of staff-work and efficient organisation. Generally speaking the organisation was excellent but too much was attempted to be done in a brief day of twenty four hours. Day after day the programme began at dawn and went on till very late at night—eighteen hours or more. Once on February 13th-14th it meant continuous movement and addressing of meetings for the whole day and night—twenty four hours—the next day's programme beginning soon after.

by ... [illegible]

... [illegible]

The Congress Provinces visited were ... the Punjab, Sind, ... Andhra ... Maharashtra and ...

... central India, ... Bombay ...

He was ... the Congress and not ...

... alone in ... and apart from the ...

... innumerable ...

... Bihar ... During a day as many as a dozen meetings ... fifty thousand or even ...

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These intensive tours called for a great deal of staff-work and efficient ... speaking the organisation was excellent but ... be done ... a brief day of twenty-four hours ... at dawn ... went on till very ... January 13th-14th it meant ... continuous movement and addressing ... meetings for the whole day and night ... programme beginning soon after ...

... than usual, and most of it was done in the ... months ... for the elections in February 1937. The actual number of touring days ... the elections was 130 and during ... period ...

1. ... note was written ... June 1937 ... Eighteen Months in India, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 97-98.

2

OFFICE ACCEPTANCE

1. Circular to P.C.Cs[1]

Allahabad
February 9, 1937

Dear Comrade,

As you are aware the A.I.C.C. will meet in the third week of March to consider the question of office acceptance. Before the A.I.C.C. meets the P.C.Cs have to send their recommendations in accordance with the Congress resolution and the P.C.Cs are supposed to consult their district and local committees. The object is to have a large body of opinion of the rank and file of the Congress to enable the A.I.C.C. to decide the question. As the time at our disposal is short early steps should be taken to consult provincial and local committees. I would therefore request you to take steps in this matter as soon as you are free from the elections and to communicate to our office the recommendations of your P.C.C. and local committees.

These recommendations should obviously bear in mind and should fit in with the general Congress policy governing the new Act, as embodied in the Congress resolutions and the Congress election manifesto. Brief replies, positive or negative, will not be very helpful. Therefore a reasoned recommendation should be sent outlining the line of action to be taken up by the Congress members of the legislatures to further our policy of rejection of the Act as a whole and to impede the further development of the federal scheme. This policy has to be an all-India one. It should deal with the specific instances of the Congress having an absolute majority in a provincial assembly, a doubtful majority on a roughly fifty-fifty basis, and a minority. If all these considerations are borne in mind and discussed, the recommendations will help both the A.I.C.C. and the public generally in coming to right conclusions. It should always be remembered that the question is one of larger policy and not merely one of local significance.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-28/1937, p. 524, N.M.M.L.

2. The Need for Sanctions[1]

There are three views on the question of office acceptance. These are: first, we should go to the legislatures to wreck the constitution and therefore we should not accept office; second, we should accept office and run the constitution; third, we should accept office with a view to wrecking the constitution. I would however like to hear the views of the members who are attending the meeting.

To me this constitution appears to be worthless. It does not give us any real powers or rights. Our hands and feet will remain tied. We shall not be able to do anything in particular while in office.

The main question before us is how to wreck the constitution. Our main programme lies outside the legislatures. That programme is to create sanctions. Without creating sanctions we cannot do anything. The country's increasing sanction should be reflected inside the legislatures. The legislatures should not be divorced from the reality outside.

1. Speech at the meeting of the Allahabad District Congress Committee, 19 February 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 20 February 1937.

3. The Importance of Mass Contacts[1]

Allahabad
February 19, 1937

Dear Comrade,

Now that the elections are over we are in a position to review the situation and plan our future work. The larger policy governing our work in the legislatures and outside has already been laid down by the Congress

1. Circular to the provincial Congress committees. A.I.C.C. File No. P-1/1936, p. 9, N.M.M.L.

—the policy of fighting the new Act and the federation, and working for the constituent assembly. How best to do this, in so far as the legislatures are concerned, will be determined by the A.I.C.C. next month. But the large body of Congress workers should not merely wait for developments. They have immediate and important work ahead of them and this has to be undertaken whatever the ultimate decision of the A.I.C.C. might be.

The elections have taught us afresh the old lesson—that our strength comes from the masses and from mass organisation and the facing of problems affecting the masses. Everywhere, where we went to the masses direct, we had splendid response from them. Our very few reverses were largely due to our workers not looking to the masses in that area but relying on the support of small groups and individuals. But the days of small groups controlling elections are past.

Secondly, wherever Congress work had been done in the past regularly and efficiently and the Congress organisation had been kept functioning, our success was overwhelming. It was not the election campaign so much as the previous work and contacts with the masses that helped us.

Thirdly, our election campaign itself was something much more than getting some Congressmen elected to the legislatures. It was a wideflung appeal to India's millions to line up with the Congress for Indian independence and the facing and ending of the appalling poverty and misery of the Indian people. It was to this cry and appeal that these millions responded in such magnificent measure.

Our future work must therefore keep all this in view. We must remember always that despite all our success in the elections our most important work lies with the masses. Work in the legislatures, in order to have any effectiveness, must be kept in line with mass work and mass contacts. The newly elected Congress members of the legislatures have, inevitably, to carry through their tasks in these legislatures, but they have a larger field of action and that is their constituency. They represent not only their voters, who form ten per cent of the population, but also the ninety per cent others in that area. They must therefore keep intimate touch with these masses of our countrymen and coordinate their activity in the legislatures with their work outside. Both have the same objective—Indian independence and the lessening of the burdens of our people.

Mass work cannot be done with success individually. It requires organisation. Obviously the organisation that can undertake this with success is the Congress. Therefore our immediate objective must be the formation of Congress committees in every village. This would be

in accordance with the direction of the Faizpur Congress.[2] Wherever I have travelled during these last few months of intensive touring, I have laid stress on village committees and I have invariably found that the peasantry and others welcomed the idea warmly. We must therefore start this working of forming village committees immediately. The village and the peasant await us—let them not wait in vain.

Anti-Constitution Day: Another important work faces us. This is the hartal on April 1st in accordance with the resolution of the Faizpur Congress calling for a hartal or general strike on that day. I have found during my tours that this idea has met with a ready response. It must be popularised from now onwards, so that this day might be a magnificent demonstration of the nation's detestation of the constitution and its resolve to be free. Every cooperation to make this day a success must be invited and welcomed. All those who want to get rid of the constitution and stand for a free India should be invited to join, such as trade unions, merchants' associations, peasants' unions, students' associations and like bodies.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. The Congress constitution and mass contacts resolution passed by the Faizpur Congress directed the provincial Congress committees to establish primary committees in villages.

4. Congressmen and Ministries[1]

Allahabad
February 19, 1937

Dear Comrade,

Consequent on the Congress victory at the polls the press is full of anticipation and rumours about ministries and coalitions.[2] I need hardly inform you that all these are products of fertile imagination and have

1. Circular to the provincial Congress committees. A.I.C.C. File No. P-1/1937-38, p. 177, N.M.M.L. Jawaharlal also issued the substance of this letter as a statement to the press on 22 February 1937.
2. There was speculation in the press that the Congress intended to form a ministry in the U.P. and that an understanding had been reached between the Congress and independent Muslim members in the Frontier Province Assembly.

little relation to facts. So far as Congress members and parties of the legislatures are concerned they cannot take any such step till the A.I.C.C. has finally decided on our course of action. Therefore, all such Congress members must studiously refrain from committing themselves in any way whatsoever either to other groups or to members of the governments. In the event of a leader of the Congress Party in a provincial assembly being invited by the head of the government in that province his answer should be that he and his colleagues are not in a position to enter into any conversations till the A.I.C.C. has issued its direction on the subject.

The newly elected Congress members of provincial assemblies have already met in some provinces to elect their office-bearers. They are likely to meet for this purpose in the remaining provinces soon. It is desirable that these parliamentary groups should remain in close touch with their provincial Congress committees and should confer with them and report to them from time to time. In this way a close connection will be established between work inside the legislature and our outside activities and the two will be coordinated together.

Please inform the newly elected Congress members of your provincial legislature of this circular. I enclose an extra copy of it to be sent immediately to the leader of the Congress assembly party in your province.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

5. Circular to P.C.Cs[1]

Allahabad
March 3, 1937

Dear Comrade,
I enclose a copy of a circular I am issuing to the secretaries of P.C.Cs for your information so that you might pass it on to the leader of the Congress parliamentary party in your province. It is quite possible that you or the leader of the Congress parliamentary party may

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-14/1937, p. 65, N.M.M.L.

be approached by representatives of the government to discuss formation of ministries or other matters relating to the legislature. You may also be approached by other groups in the legislature. It is highly desirable that the response to all such requests should be clear and definite and uniform all over India. With other groups we can form no alliances.

If a request comes from a Governor for an interview to discuss such matters, an answer should be sent pointing out that such discussions can serve little useful purpose at this stage till the A.I.C.C. has finally decided the lines of our future policy. If, however, the Governor still desires to meet you or the leader of the parliamentary party, you or he should see him and give him an answer on the same lines. Further, you can draw his attention to the resolutions of the Working Committee recently passed which lay down the general lines of the policy which will govern us in the legislatures and outside.[2] Beyond this you cannot go at this stage.

The question of ministries is still undecided and all speculations in regard to it are premature and undesirable. There is however another question: who is going to be the president of the legislature? It is likely that our policy will be to put up a Congress member for this post and to ask the party to support him. This post is an important one involving constant contact with representatives of the government and requiring the possession of many qualities. We cannot distribute this or any other post or office as rewards to individuals, however deserving of reward they might be. We have to keep this larger viewpoint of our cause and our freedom struggle always before us. Therefore all such matters must be considered from this larger viewpoint. It is desirable therefore that you or your party should arrive at no final decisions in such matters without reference to the Working Committee. Whenever such questions arise, I shall expect to hear from you.

2. At its meeting held in Wardha on 27-28 February and 1 March 1937, the Working Committee declared: "The Congress has entered the legislatures not to cooperate with the new constitution or the government but to combat the Act and the policy underlying it, as this Act and policy are intended to tighten the hold of British imperialism on India and to continue the exploitation of the Indian people. The immediate objective is to resist the introduction and working of the federal part of the Act, and to lay stress on the nation's demand for a constituent assembly." Another resolution asked the Congress members of the assemblies to coordinate the work inside the legislatures with the Congress work done outside.

I shall be glad if you will communicate the contents of this letter to the leader of the Congress parliamentary party in your province.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

6. The Need for a Long-term View[1]

We have reached a stage when we should have a clear-cut policy. The ultimate goal of the Congress is to capture power. The seizure, nay, the revolutionary seizure, of power is the aim of the Congress. It is not only for removing the defects of the administration, but also to wrench the power of government with the force and strength acquired through the mandate given to us by the people. We should not therefore forget that goal whatever may be the decision arrived at on office acceptance. But we should carefully judge all our actions and measure each step that we take so that we are able to know that in our struggle we are going in the right direction. Unless we have some fixed norms and standards by which we judge our actions, we shall be lost in the confusion about the issue of office acceptance by the Congress. The test of any step taken, such as acceptance of ministry or otherwise, depends on how we can propagate our work and what effect it will have on the rank and file of the Congress. We have to see from a long-term point of view whether we are taking a false step for some short-term and immediate gain.

Although the Congress has kept the issue open, it has given sufficient expression of its policy in the election manifesto and the various resolutions passed from time to time by the Working Committee. The basic idea is not to extend our cooperation to the present constitution. The main policy of the Congress has once again been placed before the people by the Congress Working Committee when it met recently at Wardha. It was with a view to give clear directions to the people that the Working Committee at Wardha passed resolutions emphasising the Congress objective, though decision on the office acceptance issue was postponed until opinions of the provincial committees were received.

1. Speech at Allahabad, 3 March 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 4 March 1937.

We are fighing for things afar and we must look ahead. We must have a clear-cut policy. If we have such a policy then we can expect the masses to support us. I am quite sure that any show of sophistry or cleverness at this juncture would not work. I have tried to understand the kisans and I am of opinion that they would understand and appreciate a clear and straightforward policy better. In my view, the kisans and labourers are anti-imperialists. But we should not be led away by any wrong notion that by doing a little good to the kisans we would be able to strengthen our hold on them. Such a move would amount to *chal bazi*.

I am surprised to hear Dr. Katju arguing that we should enter the legislatures to prove our capacity to maintain law and order and reduce forgery and perjury. Well, this is not at all the issue before Congressmen. What we have to keep in view is the object and the means that we adopt for achieving it. We have to see very carefully what effect will be produced by any particular action of ours on the people whose support and sympathies we enjoy.

7. The Snare of the Constitution[1]

By casting votes in the legislatures we cannot wreck the constitution. The utmost we can do is to create deadlocks. We can wreck it when our efforts are backed by organised mass effort. Issues bigger than mere elections await us. Through elections we wanted to raise a storm and create a revolutionary outlook. The Congress victory has created an atmosphere in the country which could not have been accomplished by individual canvassing as pursued in the previous elections.

We must however investigate the causes of the few defeats which we have suffered. Though the Muslim nominees of the Congress have been defeated in the U.P.,[2] I refuse to believe that the Congress has no

1. Speech at the Congress legislators' meeting, Lucknow, 6 March 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 8 March 1937.
2. In the U.P. elections, out of 66 Muslim seats, the Congress contested only 9 and lost all.

hold on the Muslim masses. I am sure that when the next opportunity comes we shall not lose a single Muslim seat in the rural areas though I am not quite certain about the urban seats. I don't think the Muslim masses are indifferent to the Congress. In my opinion, our defeat was mainly due to our failure to reach them. Our efforts at reaching them in the countryside were inadequate, mainly due to the paucity of Muslim workers. We now need Muslim workers in larger numbers.

We must also fully understand the implications of Congressmen's entry into the legislatures. Nobody likes fighting for the sake of fighting, but we must not forget our objective, namely, acquisition of power for the bigger struggle that awaits us. I just cannot believe that any major problem confronting the country can be solved within the present political structure. I therefore think that mere formation of a ministry would not enable us to do any good to the peasantry. I regard the present constitution as a trap to catch us and mislead us. One thing however is certain, i.e., whether we are in office or not, we are in closer grip with the major problems. If we view the present situation in the proper perspective, we shall see that even if the Congress decides to accept office that would be for ending British imperialism and not for strengthening it.

I also want to refute the allegation that the Congress Working Committee has prejudged the issue of office acceptance. I want to make it clear that the Working Committee has arrived at no decision in this regard. It is keeping its mind open on the issue. We must however remember that for success inside the legislatures we must not lose our contact with the masses outside.

8. To Vallabhbhai Patel[1]

Allahabad
March 8th, 1937

My dear Vallabhbhai,

I returned from Lucknow this morning and received your letter of the 4th.

1. Maharashtra Government (D.I.G., C.I.D.) records File No. 3590/H/II.

On return from Wardha I issued a circular to P.C.Cs.[2] I suppose you must have seen it in the press. I sent a personal letter to the presidents of P.C.Cs on the question of conversations with government etc.[3] It is irritating to find all this loose talk about ministries being carried on by Congressmen and newspapers. I felt annoyed at some evidence of it in U.P. circles. I had not intended taking any aggressive part in the debate on the office issue in the U.P.P.C.C. but this atmosphere and various intrigues induced me to do so and I plunged in.

Quite apart from the office issue, the whole manner of treating this subject is foolish and lacking in self-respect and political sense. The real significance of our victory in the elections is lost in arguments about the spoils of office. I have just had a letter from Agatha Harrison from London in which she points out this danger.[4] It was because of this that she stated at a meeting there (I think of M.Ps.) that the election was fought on the issue of independence and the victory was on that issue, and not on petty matters of detail.

I hope to reach Delhi on the 15th morning. I shall stay at Ansari's house.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

2. See *ante*, item 3.
3. See *ante*, item 4.
4. Agatha Harrison wrote to Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal on 3 March 1937: "What is not realised is the basis on which people have been returned to power nor the strength of feeling behind that basis. This we are doing all in our power to make clear so that in the days ahead public opinion is aware of the issues that are at stake.... I am saying over and again that the issue now is between Congress and the Government of India, that it has been returned to power on a very simple issue by a method this country understands, an election, that the result of this is very clear."

9. Speculations about Office Acceptance[1]

In spite of resolutions of the Working Committee and warnings issued by responsible Congressmen, I find that some newspapers and individuals continue to indulge in speculations about Congress ministries. I cannot stop them from these flights of fancy but may I remind them again that our cause is not advanced thereby. The election was fought and won on big issues—independence, ending of the present Act, constituent assembly—and behind this objective of ours ever hovered the spectre of the terrible poverty and misery of our people. The millions of India have set their seal on this objective and if we are true to them and to our pledges, we must only think in terms of these big issues. All India knows that the office acceptance issue will be decided within ten days by the All India Congress Committee in Delhi. Let us await that decision and abide by that decision in a disciplined way. But whatever that decision may be it must keep our objective and policy in view. And all those who think in any other and lesser terms do disservice to our cause. To discuss the personnel of ministries when the whole question of acceptance of office itself is undecided seems to me lacking in the dignity, restraint and self-respect which our great organisation demands of its members. The recent decision of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee[2] should be a warning to those who think too light-heartedly in terms of personnel of ministries. We are not out for the spoils of office but for bigger, vaster things affecting our millions, and we have to find the best way to gain them.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 8 March 1937. *The Leader*, 10 March 1937.
2. The U.P.P.C.C., meeting in Lucknow on 7 March 1937, resolved in favour of non-acceptance of office by a majority of thirty votes.

10. On Non-acceptance of Office[1]

It is surprising that the press which is supposed to know everything and be all-pervasive is completely out of touch with the feelings of the people, particularly in rural India. It is also ignorant of many happenings in the country. Newspapers play a great role and exert great influence on the people. We are aware of the conditions in Germany and Italy where the news is absolutely one-sided.

> Question: Why does the Congress have a legislative programme if it does not intend taking up office?

Jawaharlal Nehru: The Congress has to go to the people and tell them what it stands for apart from telling them whether it can carry out its programme or not. The question really is not bound up with the taking up of office. Many things that the Congress wants seem to be outside the purview of the present Act and even if the Congress accepts office it may not be able to give effect to them.

> Q: Is acceptance of office a part of the process relating to the wrecking of the new constitution as envisaged in the election manifesto?

JN: The phrase used in the election manifesto is meant to convey an idea of combating the constitution and ending it as soon as possible and, I believe, that would remain the background of the Congress policy.

> Q: After having placed a well-defined programme before the country, would not the Congress, by refusing to take office, be disheartening the electorate?

JN: If the Congress, after accepting office, failed to carry out its programme, would it not irritate the people more?

> Q: Is it not necessary to take advantage of whatever power is given under the Act and give effect to the extra-legislative activities of the Congress?

1. Interview to the press, Delhi, 14 March 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 15 March 1937.

JN: What happens in our villages is of greater significance than what happens inside the legislatures, and taking the whole position into account, our strength would be increased more by work outside than inside the legislatures.

11. On Formation of Congress Ministries[1]

This convention cannot be a permanent body, but that does not mean that it would cease to exist. Its constituents will be there and they can be called together if need arises. There are several questions, in the absence of direction, with regard to the work of the Congress legislators in the provinces wherein they are not in a majority and it is asked whether alliances with other groups are permitted.

No alliance can be entered into without the sanction of the Working Committee but cooperation in particular matters with other groups has not been ruled out.

The ultimate control of the work of Congress legislators would vest in a small committee of three to five members. The intention is not that this committee should necessarily be representative of different provinces or provincial Congress legislators. Personally I do not feel that there is any objection to a non-legislative arm controlling the legislative arm of the Congress.

There is no need to discuss how important or representative the convention is. The delegates attending the convention are representatives, not because they are victors in elections but because they represent the Congress viewpoint. The convention can do nothing apart from the Congress. Immediately it does so it would become a rival organisation. The resolution amounts to disobeying of the directions given by the Working Committee to the convention. How can Congressmen invite

1. From *The Hindustan Times*, 20 March 1937.
This speech was delivered at the subjects committee meeting of the All India Convention of Congress members held in Delhi on 19 March 1937 on the resolution moved by Yakub Hassan, a Congressman from Madras, proposing that the convention should invite non-Congress legislators also to discuss the plan for the preparation of a constitution.

the cooperation of semi-imperialist groups and permit them to have a say in the matter of framing the future constitution? It is a dangerous thing to revert to an "all party attitude". There has been enough weakening in this matter. The constitution should be drafted by the strong hand of the masses, not by the quill pens placed above their ears. If the object is to consider the communal issue and find out why Muslim candidates did not succeed in elections in the same measure as others, I am agreeable to it. If you want to combat the psychology of fear that pervades the country with regard to the communal problem, I welcome it, but for that the ground will have to be prepared first by a small committee and then a larger body could take it up. We have failed to make any advance in solving the communal problem because this method has not been adopted.

There is no reason why we should not discuss with non-Congress legislators or others, but the proposal made in the resolution really goes beyond the terms of reference of the convention. That is not the only objection. I repeat that the subject is not one that should straightway be referred to a large gathering. Otherwise, more harm than good might be done to the object which Mr. Yakub Hassan[2] has in mind.

2. (1875-1940); a leading Congressman of Tamil Nadu and one of the founders of the Muslim League; member, Madras Legislative Council, 1930 and Minister for Public Works in the Congress ministry formed in Madras Presidency, 1937-39.

12. Presidential Address to the All India Convention of Congress Legislators[1]

We are used to our Congress gatherings, vast and impressive and representing the will of the Indian people for freedom. Behind them lie half a century of our country's history and a tradition of growth and change and adaptation to fresh needs and new situations. But today we meet in this convention under novel conditions, for this convention

1. Delhi, 19 March 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 20 March 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 104-121.

has no background except such as we determine. Well-established institutions and organisations develop, in the course of time, a certain will and momentum which carry them forward almost apart from the desires of their constituent elements. They have an individuality which expresses itself in its own particular way, a certain stability and steadiness of purpose as well as a certain conservatism. They do not easily move out of their moorings; like an elephant, they are heavy of movement, but when they move, they have all the greater momentum, and they change the shape of things. Such is our Congress.

But this convention is new and few people seem to know what it is or what it is going to be. Some doubt is justified; and yet all of us know well our moorings and our purpose, and though, as a convention, we may be new, we have our roots in those past struggles which are written in the history of the Congress and our freedom movement. This convention is a child of the Congress, looking to it for strength and guidance.

In writing this address[2] I suffer from a disability. During the few days that will elapse between now and the meeting of the convention, the major issues before us will be decided by the All India Congress Committee. I do not know what these final decisions will be, and so, when this written message changes to the spoken word, much may have happened which might need variation or emphasis. And yet, whatever this variation might be, the Congress policy and programme are clear and fixed for us by repeated resolutions of the Congress itself and by our election manifesto. We must move within that orbit and any attempt to go out of it would be a betrayal of that policy and of the larger interests for which the Congress has stood. Those of you who have been elected to the new legislatures have asked the suffrage of the people on the basis of the Congress election manifesto, and you must inevitably take your stand on this. The very greatness of your success at the polls is a striking testimony of the response of the masses to this policy and programme. Millions have testified to their faith and confidence in this; they have given it the final seal of approval of the Indian people.

The electorate was confined to a bare ten per cent of our people, but everybody knows that the lower down the scale we go, the greater is the Congress strength. The remaining ninety per cent are even more solidly for the Congress than the ten per cent who have supported us. Though our success has been overwhelming and has confounded our

2. Jawaharlal wrote this address on 11-12 March 1937.

opponents, and swept away the representatives of the big vested interests who opposed us, it should be remembered that the whole machinery of election was so designed as to weaken us. The pressure of an autocratic and entrenched government was exercised against us, and behind it were ranged all the reactionaries and obscurantists who always flourish under the shadow of imperialism. Yet we won in resounding manner.

Only in regard to the Muslim seats did we lack success. But our very failure on this occasion has demonstrated that success is easily in our grasp and the Muslim masses are increasingly turning to the Congress. We failed because we had long neglected working among the Muslim masses and we could not reach them in time. But where we reached, especially in the rural areas, we found almost the same response, the same anti-imperialist spirit, as in others. The communal problem, of which we hear so much, seemed to be utterly non-existent, when we talked to the peasant, whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. We failed also among the Muslims because of their much smaller electorate which could be easily manipulated and coerced by authority and vested interests. But I am convinced that, even so, we would have had a much larger measure of success if we had paid more attention to the Muslim masses. They have been too long neglected and misled and they deserve special consideration. I have no manner of doubt that they are turning to the Congress to seek relief from their innumerable burdens and their future cooperation is assured, provided we approach them rightly and on the basis of economic questions.

We have too long thought in terms of pacts and compromises between communal leaders and neglected the people behind them. That is a discredited policy and I trust that we shall not revert to it. And yet some people still talk of the Muslims as a group dealing with Hindus or others as a group, a medieval conception which has no place in the modern world. We deal with economic groups today and the problems of poverty and unemployment and national freedom are common for the Hindu, the Muslim, the Sikh and the Christian. As soon as we leave the top fringe, which is continually talking of percentages of seats in the legislatures and state jobs, and reach the masses, we come up against these problems. This way lies the ending of what has long been known as the communal problem.

One of the most remarkable signs of the times is the ferment among the Muslims in India, both the intelligentsia and the masses. Without any effective leadership, they have drifted aimlessly, and they resent this helpless position and feel that the communal leadership they have had

has weakened them politically, in spite of the trivial and superficial gains which they are supposed to have got from an imperialism which seeks to wean them away from the national movement. Muslims, young men and old, and the Muslim press, are full of this self-analysis, and the desire to get out of the communal rut and line up with the forces of freedom and progress is strong within them. They see how the Congress has swept away Hindu communal organisations, how it has captured the imagination of the masses, and they feel a little desolate and left out. They want to share in the triumphs of today and tomorrow, and are prepared to take their share of the burdens also. And so this election and our campaign, though they resulted in the loss of Muslim seats as a rule, have been a triumph for us even in regard to the Muslims. They have gone some way to lay the ghost of communalism. It is for us now to go ahead and welcome the Muslim masses and intelligentsia in our great organisation and rid this country of communalism in every shape and form.

The elections have many lessons to teach us but the outstanding fact is this: where we went to the masses direct we won overwhelmingly. Our partial lack of success in some provinces was clearly due to the Congress organisation there being confined to the cities and having little contact with the peasantry. We must remedy these failings and speak more and more the language of the masses and fashion our policy to meet their needs. We must carry the Congress organisation to every village, the Congress message to every mud hut.

I have referred to some of our failings and some of our failures. It is well to remember these and not to allow ourselves to be swept away by success into forgetting them. We build for the future and our foundations must be well and truly laid. To win an election is a small matter for us; we are out to win the freedom of our people.

Having disposed of these failures let me refer to the success that has come to us, for it is this tremendous success, not surprising for us who know our people, but astounding and upsetting to others, that is the outstanding feature of these elections. How carefully and lovingly the government had nursed the great vested interests of India, encouraged the big landlords and communalists, helped them to organise themselves to oppose us, and looked confidently for success in its evil venture! Where are they now, these pillars of imperialism in India and exploiters of the Indian people? Sunk almost without trace, overwhelmed by the sea of Indian humanity, swept away by the big broom of the masses from the political scene. Like a house of cards, they have fallen at the touch of reality; even so will others go

who oppose India's freedom, and a day will come when British imperialism throttles and crushes our people no more and is a dream of the past for us.

We went to our people and spoke to them of freedom and the ending of their exploitation; we went to that forgotten creature, the Indian peasant, and remembered that his poverty was the basic problem of India; we identified ourselves with him in his suffering and talked to him of how to get rid of it through political and social freedom. We told him of imperialism and of this new Act and constitution which bind us still further and which we were out to end and replace by panchayati raj, fashioned by a constituent assembly, a grand panchayat of the nation, elected by all our people. We read out to him our election manifesto and explained its significance. He and his kind gathered in vast numbers to hear us and, listening to the Congress message, his sunken eyes glistened and his shrunken starved body rose up in enthusiasm and the wine of hope filled his veins. Who, that saw that vision, can forget it, or that subsequent sight of thousands marching to the polling booths in disciplined array, ignoring pressure and threat, disdaining the free conveyances and free food offered to them by our opponents? It was a pilgrimage for them to give their allegiance to the Congress, to vote for the ending of the new constitution, for the establishment of panchayati raj when they would themselves have power to liquidate the poverty that consumed them.

That is the significance of this election. If there is any meaning in democracy, if this complicated and expensive apparatus of elections and voting has any sense behind it and is not an impertinent farce, then the Indian people have spoken so that even the deaf might hear, and proclaimed that they will not have this constitution. They have given notice to British imperialism to quit. This constitution must therefore go, lock, stock and barrel, and leave the field clear for our constituent assembly.

We talk of and discuss our policy in the legislatures, but all this is vain and profitless parleying before the fundamental and dominant fact of the situation that this constitution must go. So the people of India have decided and we shall be false and unfaithful representatives of our people if we allow ourselves to forget this fact contrary to that emphatic direction.

I know that there are elements among us who are too fond of slurring over these fundamentals, who look longingly to office, and who have even compromised the dignity of our great cause and of the Congress by discussing the personnel of ministries long before the question

of acceptance or non-acceptance of ministerial office has been decided by the All India Congress Committee. Whatever their views may be on this issue, whatever the decision of the A.I.C.C. might be, I would have them remember, now and for the future, that no Congressman worthy of his name, no Congress member of a legislature, can act except with the dignity and discipline that our cause and organisation demand. I would have them remember the election manifesto and the Congress resolutions on the basis of which they sought the suffrage of the people. Let no one forget that we have entered the legislatures not to cooperate in any way with British imperialism but to fight and end this Act which enslaves and binds us. Let no one forget that we fight for independence.

What is this independence? A clear, definite, ringing word, which all the world understands, with no possibility of ambiguity. And yet, to our misfortune, even that word has become an object of interpretation and misinterpretation. Let us be clear about it. Independence means national freedom in the fullest sense of the word; it means, as our pledge has stated, a severance of the British connection. It means anti-imperialism and no compromise with empire. Words are hurled at us: Dominion Status, Statute of Westminster,[3] British Commonwealth of Nations, and we quibble about their meaning. I see no real commonwealth anywhere, only an empire exploiting the Indian people and numerous other peoples in different parts of the world. I want my country to have nothing to do with this enormous engine of exploitation in Asia and Africa. If this engine goes, we have nothing but goodwill for England, and in any event we wish to be friends with the mass of the British people.

Dominion Status is a term which arose under peculiar circumstances and it changed its significance as time passed. In the British group of nations, it signified a certain European dominating group exploiting numerous subject peoples. That distinction continues whatever change the Statute of Westminster might have brought about in the relations *inter se* of the members of that European dominating group. That group represents British imperialism and it stands in the world today for the very order and forces of reaction against which we struggle. How then can we associate ourselves willingly with this order

3. The Statute of Westminster of 1931 declared that the "dominions are autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another in their domestic or external affairs though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations."

and these forces? Or is it conceived that we might, in the course of time and if we behave ourselves, be promoted from the subject group to the dominating group, and yet the imperialist structure and basis of the whole will remain more or less as it is? This is a vain conception having no relation to reality, and even if it were within the realms of possibility, we should have none of it, for we would then become partners in imperialism and in the exploitation of others. And among these others would probably be large numbers of our own people.

It is said, and I believe Gandhiji holds this view, that if we achieved national freedom, this would mean the end of British imperialism in India, and a necessary result of this would be the winding up of British imperialism itself. Under such conditions there is no reason why we should not continue our connection with Britain. There is force in the argument for our quarrel is not with Britain or the British people, but with British imperialism. But when we think in these terms, a larger and a different world comes into our ken, and Dominion Status and the Statute of Westminster pass away from the present to the historical past. That larger world does not think of a British group of nations, but of a world group based on political and social freedom.

To talk, therefore, of Dominion Status, in its widest significance, even including the right to separate, is to confine ourselves to one group, which of necessity will oppose and be opposed by other groups, and which will essentially be based on the present decaying social order. Therefore we cannot entertain this idea of Dominion Status in any shape or form; it is independence we want, not any particular status. Under cover of that phrase, the tentacles of imperialism will creep up and hold us in their grip, though the outer structure might be good to look at.

And so our pledge must hold and we must labour for the severance of the British connection. But let us repeat again that we favour no policy of isolation or aggressive nationalism, as the word is understood in the central European countries today. We shall have the closest of contacts, we hope, with all progressive countries, including England, if she has shed her imperialism.

But all this discussion about Dominion Status is academic talk. It is many years now since India put that idea by and there can be no reversion to it. Today, with the whole world in the cauldron of change and disaster threatening it, this lawyers' jargon seems strangely out of place. What counts today for us is to break and end this constitution. What counts for the world is Spain and British

rearmament[4] and the French armament loan,[5] and the frantic and terrific race to be ready for war before this catastrophe comes to overwhelm civilisation. When will this come, suddenly and unannounced, and make a wreck of the modern world? That is the question for you and all of us, for on our answer and on our ability to cope with this crisis will depend the future of the Indian people. We have bigger decisions to take, graver choices before us, than those of lawyers' making.

Those decisions and that action require strength and perseverance and a disciplined nation. They require the masses in intelligent and organised movement for mass ideals and mass welfare. They demand that joint front of anti-imperialist forces, of which we have heard so much, and of which our National Congress is the living embodiment. It is not by mere votes in the legislatures, or petty reforms, or even artificial deadlocks, that freedom will come, but by the mobilisation of mass strength, and the coordination of our struggle in the legislatures with our struggle outside. For, essentially, we aim at the conquest of power for the Indian people to shape their destiny, and that power will only come through our own strength and will to achieve.

This is why the Working Committee has laid stress again on the extra-parliamentary activities of the Congress members of the legislatures and on mass contacts. Our overwhelming success in the elections will be wasted if we do not keep up our intimate contacts with the masses and seek to serve them and mobilise them for the great tasks ahead.

With this background of principles and Congress policy we have to consider the narrower issue of what we are to do inside the legislatures. This narrow issue, and especially the question of acceptance or non-acceptance of ministerial office, has given rise to much controversy, and has often been considered divorced from the more fundamental factors of the situation. If we remember these factors, and the Congress and the Working Committee have stressed them again and again, the issue becomes narrowed down still further. Indeed it hardly arises, except indirectly, for, as I have already stated, the outstanding fact of the elections is that the people of this country have given their verdict clearly, unequivocally and emphatically against this slave constitution.

4. In a White Paper issued on 16 February 1937, Britain announced a five year plan of rearmament of its army, navy and air force at an estimated average expenditure of £ 300,000,000 a year.

5. France undertook to guarantee a Polish loan, chiefly for rearmament, of approximately 2,600 million francs.

If the British Government has any respect for democracy and still sees virtue in democratic procedure, as it so loudly proclaims, then it has no alternative but to withdraw this constitution and Act. That is our position and our demand, and so long as it is not acceded to we shall labour and struggle to that end.

Congress members of the legislatures have their work cut out for them by Congress resolutions. That work is primarily to fight the Act and press and work for a constituent assembly. Some people, in their ignorance, have imagined that this convention is itself the constituent assembly and that it is going to draft a new constitution for India. This convention is going to do no such thing. That is not its function and the time for drawing up India's constitution is not yet. Nor is the constituent assembly a magnified all parties conference. The constituent assembly that we demand will come into being only as the expression of the will and the strength of the Indian people; it will function when it has sanctions behind it to give effect to its decisions without reference to outside authority. It will represent the sovereignty of the Indian people and will meet as the arbiter of our destiny.

How can this assembly meet today when British imperialism holds forcible sway here with its armies of occupation, spies, informers and secret service, and the denial of civil liberty? When so many of our loved ones and comrades languish in prison or detention camp? When this monstrous constitution has been imposed upon us, despite our indignant repudiation of it?

Therefore let us be clear about it. There is no room for a constituent assembly in India till we have in effect removed these burdens and obstructions, and the will of the Indian people can have sovereign play. And, till then, there is no room in India for any other constitution imposed upon us; there is room only, unhappily, for conflict and struggle between an imperialism that dominates and a nationalism that seeks deliverance. That nationalism is no weakling today and, though it may have to wait awhile for its deliverance, it will not tolerate domination and dictation.

So we are told by the Congress to go to the legislatures not to cooperate, for this so-called cooperation would only be another name for submission to dictation, but to fight the Act. Whatever decision we might take on other issues, that basic policy remains and must remain. Inevitably it follows that we cannot have any alliances with individuals and groups who do not subscribe to this policy.

It is within this narrow framework that we have to consider the question of office acceptance. That question will have been decided by the

All India Congress Committee[6] by the time we meet in convention and I stand before you, and by that decision this convention will be bound. So I cannot say much about it here. I have often given expression to my views on this subject and our electoral victory has not changed them in any way. But we have to remember that whatever the decision of the All India Congress Committee might be, the whole logic of Congress resolutions and declarations and policy leads us to maintain a spirit of noncooperation towards this constitution and Act. Ordinarily in a democratic constitution, to have a majority means an acceptance of ministerial responsibility. To refuse responsibility and power when a democratic process offers it to us is illogical and improper. But we have neither democracy nor power in this constitution; the illogicality and contradiction lie in the constitution itself. Are we to twist and distort ourselves to fit in with this perversion? Therefore whatever else we might do that spirit of noncooperation and struggle against British imperialism must pervade our efforts.

Many of you are eager and desirous of doing something to relieve the burdens of our masses, to help the peasant and the worker and the vast numbers of middle class unemployed. Who does not want to do that? No one likes conflict and obstruction, and we have hungered so long for real opportunities for serving our people through constructive effort. They cry aloud for succour, these unhappy millions of our countrymen, and even when their voices are silent, their dumb eyes are eloquent with appeal. It is difficult to live in this country surrounded by this human desolation and misery, unspoken often and the harder to bear because of that. We talk of Swaraj and independence, but in human terms it means relief to the masses from their unutterable sorrow and misery. Ultimately all that we work for resolves itself into that. And if we have a chance to give such relief even in a small measure, we cannot reject it.

But that relief must be for the millions, not for a few odd individuals. And if we think in terms of those millions what relief does this new constitution offer? I have read its relevant clauses again and again, ever with a growing astonishment at the audacity of those who have framed it and thrust it on us, protecting all those who need no

6. At its meeting held in Delhi on 17-18 March 1937 the A.I.C.C. authorised and permitted the acceptance of office in provinces where the Congress commanded a majority in the legislatures, provided the leader of the Congress Party in the legislature was satisfied and was able to state publicly that the Governor would not use his special powers of interference or set aside the advice of ministers in regard to constitutional activities.

protection, confirming their privileged position as exploiters, binding us hand and foot not to touch them in any way, and leaving the masses of India to sink deeper in the quicksands of poverty. We cannot give adequate relief to the masses within the scope of this constitution; that is a demonstrable impossibility. We cannot build any new social structure so long as special privileges and vested interests surround us and suffocate us. We cannot carry out any policy, political, economic, social, educational or any other, when the whole executive agency and civil service is not subject to our control, and we may not touch the major part of the revenues. The "special powers and responsibilities" of the Governors and the Governor General apart, the Act by itself is more than sufficient to disable any minister.

But we can do some other things. We can take upon ourselves the odium and responsibility of keeping the imperialist structure functioning, we can become indirectly responsible for the repression of our own comrades, we can take away the initiative from the masses and tone down their fine temper which we ourselves have helped in building up. All this may happen if we follow the path of least resistance and gradually adapt ourselves to existing conditions. I do not think that this will happen for the temper of the Congress and the people will not allow it. We have gone too far for that.

Thus we do not seek the working of the new constitution but the most suitable way of meeting and creating deadlocks, which are inevitable in this scheme of things, and of carrying on our struggle for freedom.

I can see no flaw in my reasoning, if the premises of the Congress resolutions are accepted, as accept them we must. Whatever the A.I.C.C. may decide on this question of office acceptance, we shall have to carry on the spirit and letter of those resolutions in the legislatures as well as outside.

Our decisions must be all India decisions, for it would be fatal to have variations in policy to suit the minor needs of provinces. The unity of India has to be maintained; so also the unity of our struggle against imperialism. Danger lurks in provinces acting separately and being induced to parley separately. Therefore, as I conceive it, the chief virtue of this convention, now or later, is to keep this all India character of our work in the legislatures ever in the forefront and to prevent fissiparous tendencies and the development of provincialism. A necessary counterpart of this is the maintenance of a uniform discipline among Congress members of all legislatures. Every effort is likely to be made on the part of our opponents to effect breaches in that discipline and all India policy, but we must realise that without

that self-imposed discipline and uniformity, our strength goes and we become isolated groups and individuals, ignored and crushed in turn by our opponents.

The wider policy that will govern us must inevitably come from the Congress and that policy must be loyally carried out by this convention and its members. What other functions the convention will perform will be laid down by the All India Congress Committee and I do not wish to prejudge the issue in this written message of mine. But I can conceive the convention or its representatives not only doing what I have mentioned above, but in times of national or international crisis playing an important role in our struggle for power and freedom.

You will soon go back to your provinces and constituencies and explain to our comrades there the decisions taken here in Delhi city, and prepare for the new forms of struggle that await you. We have some experience of this struggle for freedom and many of us have given the best part of our lives to it, and a variation in its shape or form will not deter us. But we must hold to our old anchor and not be swept away by passing currents. And we must remember that we live in a dynamic world where almost everybody expects sudden and violent change and catastrophe. That crisis, national or international, may seize us by the throat unawares sooner than we imagine. So we must be ever ready for it, and we may not think or act in terms of static or slow-moving periods.

Our next task is the hartal of April 1st, and on that day, I hope, you will be in your constituencies to take part in that mighty demonstration against this slave constitution and to declare again, with millions of our countrymen, that this constitution must be scrapped and must give place to another, framed by a constituent assembly and based on the sovereignty of the people of India.

13. Observance of the Anti-Constitution Day[1]

The 1st of April will soon be upon us and I trust that all Congressmen and Congress organisations are taking suitable steps to observe that day

1. Statement to the press, Delhi, 22 March 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 23 March 1937.

as a day of complete hartal. On the evening of that day public meetings should be held in towns and villages and an identical resolution should be passed at these meetings. This resolution is given below. It has been framed on the basis of the national demand formulated by the All India Convention.

> This meeting reiterates the opinion of the people of India that the Government of India Act of 1935 has been designed to perpetuate the domination and exploitation of the Indian people. This meeting declares that the Indian people do not recognize the right of any external power or authority to dictate the political and economic structure of India. The Indian people can only accept a constitutional structure, which has been framed by them, which is based on the independence of India as a nation and which allows them full scope for development according to their needs and desires. They stand for a genuine democratic state in India where political power has been transferred to the people as a whole and the government is under their effective control. Such a state can only be created by the Indian people themselves and through the medium of a constituent assembly elected by adult suffrage and having the power to determine finally the constitution of the country.
>
> This meeting, therefore, condemns and utterly rejects the new constitution and demands its withdrawal in accordance with the declared will of the Indian people.

14. On the Futility of Office Acceptance[1]

The momentous discussions during the past week have not altered my conviction about the fundamental needs of the country at the present juncture.

1. Interview to the press, Delhi, 23 March 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 24 March 1937.

Acceptance of office under conditions which would tie the hands of the ministers and give them more responsibility than power is futile. I am not sure whether any Congress government would at all be formed. No Congress ministry, for instance, could avoid immediate action to be taken to tackle the agrarian problem or the question of rural indebtedness. The condition of the peasantry in Bengal and the United Provinces is terrible.

In the United Provinces particularly, where the peasantry is politically more conscious and better organised, the new excise duty on sugar is likely to produce a crisis.[2] Sugar factories have threatened to close, and if the threat is carried out, the economic troubles, which had been staved off by more and more land being brought under sugarcane, are bound to come to a head. The Congress ministry in the United Provinces, if there is one, would have to deal with this problem immediately.[3]

Question : Keeping in view the stress that has been laid by all the leaders on the necessity of the work outside the legislatures being more important than inside, what would be the nature of work that Congressmen would have to do outside in the country, as there is a possibility that they may lose sight of that work in view of the recent discussions on the office acceptance question, as also due to the interest that is being evinced by practically everyone in the work within the legislatures?

Jawaharlal Nehru : The Working Committee at Wardha has clearly laid down the work that has to be done outside the legislatures.[4] All Congressmen, and particularly those not engaged in any legislative work, have to carry out that decision.

2. In the budget for 1937-38, excise duty on sugar was increased from Rs. 1.31 to Rs. 2.00. The Finance Member had contended that if the new additional excise resulted in the closure of weak and inefficient sugar factories it would be an advantage to the industry as a whole.
3. The United Provinces Sugar Factories Control Act enacted by the Congress ministry ensured supply of sugarcane to the factories along with a minimum price for sugar, and created an official agency to deal with any crisis.
4. The Working Committee called upon every Congress member to keep in touch with the primary and other local Congress committees in the constituency, share the responsibility of keeping the Congress organisation in that area in efficient working condition and remain in touch with the masses.

The legislative programme of the Congress, important as it is because of its possible results, must not lead us to forget the organisational and other activities of the Congress. It is on the strength of our organisation and our direct contact with the masses that our ultimate strength depends. Without this mass sanction behind us we can do little in the assemblies and still less outside.

We should, therefore, let the Congress workers continue to concentrate on the formation of village committees and enrol Congress members. The decisions of the A.I.C.C. and all other programmes of the Congress must be explained at the village meetings so that the masses can keep in touch with the political developments. We should try to enquire into their sufferings and, whenever possible, must try to give them relief. The Congress must mean the masses of the country and masses constitute the nation.

15. To Lord Lothian[1]

Allahabad
March 25, 1937

Dear Lord Lothian,

Thank you for your letter[2] of the 4th March which reached me in Delhi just after we had come to our decision.[3] May I say that I appreciate your writing to me even though I may not always agree with you? I am quite sure that a full consideration of all points of view is necessary in order to approximate to the truth or to the right course to be taken.

The Congress Committee, as you no doubt know, went very far towards permitting the acceptance of responsibility under the new constitution. They went further than many of us wanted. We have certainly asked for an assurance that they will not interfere with the minister's discretion or ignore his advice so long as he acts within the constitution. If that assurance cannot be given then it is clearer than

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. He expressed the hope that as the Congress was the largest single party in six provinces it would be willing to take office.
3. On 17-18 March 1937, the A.I.C.C. had reiterated Mahatma Gandhi's insistence on a written assurance from the Governors that they would not make use of their special powers as a condition precedent to the Congress taking office.

ever that these special powers are not unrealities. It seems to me that the offer is a very fair one on our part. I do not yet know whether such assurances will be given.

I wrote to you once before, I think, that I am in entire agreement with you on the importance of retaining and strengthening the organic unity of India.[4] All our policy is shaped to that end. We want to and must avoid the calamities and frustrations which the division of India must bring in its train. But surely the federal part of the new constitution does not help this unity. It sows the very seeds which produce discord and disunity and conflict.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 62-75.

16. On the Fascist Nature of the Constitution[1]

Recent developments have made it clear that Congress ministries are unlikely. Even the modest assurance that was asked for on behalf of the Congress has been denied and we shall soon see minority ministries backed by the special powers of the Governors. That is as it should be for it reveals the nature of the new constitution so that even the blind can see. It is a constitution with a democratic veil in the provinces but essentially of a fascist type concentrating power in the Governors and the Governor General. It is the culmination of the growth of the fascist spirit in the British Government in India and with the introduction of the federal scheme the structure will be complete. The veil is torn and the reality stands forth in all its ugliness. We are content as we would have been in any event. The Congress policy has been laid down in the clearest terms and to that all of us must adhere. We fight the Act and the constitution and we shall put an end to them. Let us all pull together to that end. The first answer must come on the 1st April. So remember the 1st April.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 28 March 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 29 March 1937.

17. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
March 28, 1937

My dear Krishna,

I returned from Delhi yesterday. I feel tired and rather empty after these months of hard work. What I want badly is rest to refresh a jaded mind.

Your cable reached me in Delhi. I could not answer, partly because we were in the middle of the discussion, partly because only a very long cable in reply would have sufficed. I suppose you know how matters shaped themselves in Delhi. I do not wish to write much now. The future is uncertain still. It is by no means clear that ministries will be accepted by the Congress for this depends on the assurance being given by the government. The chances seem to be that a clear assurance will not be given. You will probably know by the time you get this letter...

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

18. On the Breakdown of the Negotiations[1]

I am perfectly satisfied at the turn the events are taking.[2] The Congress position is perfectly clear as we propose to go straight on, and we hope to put an end to this constitution before long.

1. Message to the press given on the telephone from Allahabad, 29 March 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 29 March 1937.
2. On the refusal of the Governors to give necessary assurances, the leaders of the Congress Party in the six provinces had expressed their inability to form ministries.

19. To Abdul Walli[1]

Allahabad
30.3.1937

My dear Walli,[2]
I have just received your letter.[3] I am very glad you wrote to me, because I value your opinion and especially at the present moment when we are all thinking hard how to deal with the Muslim position in the Congress.

About Khaliq I need hardly tell you that I have myself been much put out at the way he has been drifting away from the Congress. For so many years past I have had a warm corner in my heart for him and I believe that my affection for him is reciprocated. It has grieved me therefore to find that political developments seem to be driving each one of us away from the other. For nearly a year I have neither seen him nor corresponded with him. I would be happy indeed if he broke loose from the reactionaries who surround him.

I am surprised to learn from your letter about a scheme being hatched to bring about a coalition between the Congress and the League Party in the assembly. I had not heard anything about it. I am entirely opposed to this as I am opposed to all pacts and coalitions with small groups at the top. So far as I know my colleagues of the Working Committee are also opposed to it. Abul Kalam Azad who is here at present also definitely opposes it.

But what worries me is the larger question of getting Muslims in a body to join the Congress and to get rid of their vague suspicion of that body. For undoubtedly there is that suspicion and hitch. I wonder if you have any suggestions to offer. If so do write to me.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(i)/1937, p. 139, N.M.M.L.
2. (1885-1941); a Congressman of Lucknow; suffered imprisonment several times during the freedom struggle; worked as secretary to Motilal Nehru, 1923-26; published *Maloomat*, an Urdu monthly magazine.
3. In his letter of 28 March 1937 he informed Jawaharlal that Khaliquzzaman had been drifting away from the Congress and should not be brought back through any alliances or coalition with the Muslim League in the assembly; "once the Congress enters into a pact with the Muslim League it loses the right to ask the Muslims to join it."

20. To Govind Ballabh Pant[1]

Allahabad
30.3.1937

My dear Pantji,

I have just received a letter from an old Muslim friend whose opinion I value.[2] In the course of this letter he says that "a scheme is being hatched with the help of Pantji and Mohanlal to bring about coalition between the Congress and League parties in the assembly." I am surprised to read this and I can hardly believe that there is anything behind it. Still I am referring the matter to you, because it has been brought to my notice under the best of auspices. I am personally convinced that any kind of pact or coalition between us and the Muslim League will be highly injurious. It will mean that we almost lose our right to ask the Muslims to join us directly. It will mean many other things also which are equally undesirable. But I need not go into this matter in any detail. Abul Kalam Azad, as you know, is strongly opposed to it.

As I told you on the telephone last night I have telegraphed to Vallabhbhai suggesting to him that a meeting of the parliamentary sub-committee be held here about the 7th April. Abul Kalam is keen on this and I think, on the whole, that it will be a good thing to have the meeting. But we must have a Working Committee meeting also before long.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. E-1/1936-37, p. 11, N.M.M.L.
2. See the preceding item.

21. On the Success of Anti-Constitution Day[1]

I have recently had what is for me an unusual experience. For some days I have been confined to bed with fever. Fever and I have long

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 7 April 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 10 April 1937.

been strangers to each other and this new companionship has proved irksome and annoying. I am glad to say that I have ended it, and my first act on leaving my sick-bed is to offer my respectful and warmest congratulations to the Indian people on the wonderful demonstration of solidarity, discipline, peaceful organisation, and unity of all classes which the hartal of April 1st demonstrated. That hartal was meant to give yet again vivid and emphatic expression to the will of the Indian people to fight and end the new constitution. It did that in a manner which none will forget. But it was something more even than that. For behind that stoppage of work, the closed shops and businesses, the fields lying untended for a day, the empty colleges and schools, the vast processions and meetings, one saw the masses in movement, one sensed the ferment in their millions of minds, and the hunger that drove them like an elemental force to political and social freedom. Hindu and Muslim had that common aim and, forgetting their petty rivalries of a day, worked together and made the first of April a day that we shall not forget. That first day of April set a seal on that unity which had long eluded us, and it cast its glamour on the future that we are going to fashion with our united efforts.

Efforts were made to suppress this great demonstration, especially in Bengal. They failed as they were bound to do. Some of our dear comrades have been arrested and await trial. I do not know fully the circumstances of their arrest but I do know that it was our desire to avoid conflict with authority for that is our policy at present. But I should like to say that this general policy does not and cannot mean that we are to submit always to every foolish or offensive order that is passed by police or executive authority to impede our normal work.

The first of April saw the masses of India in motion; it also witnessed a frantic search for individuals to put on the liveries of ministers, for ministries were going abegging and there were few so poor in spirit as to be tempted by them. The strange and vivid contrast between these two brought out the difference between the real India and the marionettes that are made to function on the official stage. And the two together brought out the pitiful absurdity of the new constitution which the people of India have already turned into a corpse that awaits burial.

Lawyers, as is their wont, discuss the mechanics of this constitution, and some even forget their law in their eagerness to champion the British cause. And faded and discarded individuals, whose groups and policies the public had brushed aside into nothingness, appear again as interlopers and usurpers, posing as ministers, though they have no sanction or strength behind them, except the force of British arms to

support them.[2] Legal quibbles will find rest now for the most eminent of the constitutionalists, Professor Berriedale Keith, has had his say and condemned the Act and supported the Congress attitude.[3]

But behind the mechanics of the constitution lie the realities of the situation, and these realities are that the masses have entrusted the Congress with their mandate and their power to fight this constitution. They are not going to abdicate that power because minority ministries function and the provincial assemblies are not allowed to meet for months. We shall know how to deal with this and every situation for the initiative lies with us so long as the masses are with us and we are true to our mandate. But our eyes must always be turned to these masses, and not to legal quibbles, and the test of every action must be that it increases the strength of the masses.

2. The Congress having refused office a deadlock ensued in the six provinces where it had a majority, and the Governors appointed *ad interim* ministers who had no support in the legislatures.
3. (1879-1944); Sanskrit scholar and constitutional lawyer; professor of Sanskrit and comparative philosophy, Edinburgh University, 1914-1944. About the Act he wrote: "To say, as Lord Erskine and Lord Brabourne have said, that they would give the ministers all help, sympathy and cooperation is meaningless, for the Act itself gives powers and imposes duties on Governors, which reduce the ministerial responsibility to a farce."

22. On Federation and Deadlocks[1]

The Congress is a democratic organisation led no doubt by its accredited leaders who are essentially bound by the decisions of its majorities and rank and file. On the question of the constitution Act the Congress has repeatedly stated its position in the clearest language. It went to the elections with a manifesto; it won those elections on the basis of that manifesto although our friends who are never tired of pointing out the error of our ways criticised that manifesto. We are pursuing essentially that policy, now clarified and laid down afresh by the A.I.C.C. It is not

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 8 April 1937. *The Leader*, 10 April 1937.

open to any of us to go outside the decision of the A.I.C.C. in this matter. So far as we are concerned we are completely satisfied with the developments. We believed that deadlocks were inherent in the scheme and these have appeared at the very outset even though we attempted to avoid them. Our policy takes into consideration these deadlocks and therefore is not upset by them.

There is nothing further that we need do; so far as the government is concerned our cards are on the table but so far as the people are concerned we have much to do, for it is from them that we derive our support and strength and it is in their increasing strength that lies the promise of victory of our cause.

There is no question of our approaching the government in any way in this matter. The conditions that the A.I.C.C. has imposed on us remain; it is for the government to agree or not to agree.

23. On Lord Zetland's Statement[1]

We should be grateful to the Secretary of State for India[2] for his statement clarifying the attitude of the government.[3] It is the old patronizing and hectoring attitude to which we have been long accustomed. We are told to take the Act or leave it. This time the British Government have realized that we do not take this Act and we reject it with all the strength that is in us. That has been our consistent policy and that is the mandate which we have received from millions of people in India. If there is any force in democracy, we must be true to our mandate from the electorate.

1. Interview to the press, Allahabad, 9 April 1937. *The Hindustan* Times, 11 April 1937.
2. 2nd Marquis of Zetland (1876-1961); Governor of Bengal, 1917-1922; member, Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on India, 1933; Secretary of State for India, 1935-1940.
3. In a statement in the House of Lords on 8 April 1937 Zetland reiterated the government's stand that the Governors could not give any assurance of non-interference within the framework of the constitution and therefore no useful purpose would be served by inviting Mahatma Gandhi to a conference for resolving the constitutional deadlock in the six provinces.

It is good and noble of the Lords to tell us what democracy means but it is not customary for democracy to be interpreted by the House of Lords or Hitler or Mussolini.

It is as clear as the noonday sun that our paths lie in different directions. There is nothing of common interest. We shall go along our paths resolutely and with a will to put an end to this bogus Act which has been forced down upon us.

24. On Lord Lothian's Statement[1]

I am glad that Lord Lothian recognises that the final authority to resolve any conflict must be the electorate.[2] If that is so, why all this argument and this talk of special powers and safeguards? It is because the Congress claims by right of the recent election to represent that electorate that it voices the demand of that electorate. We are perfectly prepared to go to that electorate and take its decision. It must be remembered that the real question is not one of legal quibbles but of where power rests—with the British Government's executive or with the Indian electorate. It was to make this clear that the Congress demanded assurances and Lord Zetland has emphatically replied that the British Government has all this power and intends sticking on to it in spite of the elections and the electorates. The real contradiction lies in the Act itself. It is an absurdity which has hardly anything to do with democracy or responsibility.

1. Interview to the press, Allahabad, 14 April 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 15 April 1937.
2. Commenting on Mahatma Gandhi's proposal for arbitration to resolve the constitutional deadlock, Lothian, in a letter to the *Times* of 12 April 1937, had observed: "I am inclined to think that the real key to the solution lies in the recognition that under a system of responsible government the ultimate decision against abuse of power comes to rest with the electorate."

25. The Magnitude of the Crisis[1]

The crisis that has arisen cannot be fully understood in the narrow legalist way nor can any real comparison be made with the constitutional development of the dominions. No dominion had ever been insulted in an Act like the India Act, passed in the teeth of the fiercest opposition, forcibly imposed, and containing the concentration of power in the hands of Governors and the Viceroy with a federal structure of stereotyped autocracy entrenching feudalism and making social progress constitutionally impossible. The recent elections fought on the issue of independence and utter rejection of the new constitution resulted in an overwhelming victory for this policy. Indian democracy has thus emphatically demanded the withdrawal of the constitution. Democracy and special powers in the hands of the executive are incompatible, one suppresses the other. The dominion Governors' powers of veto are limited and the British conventions largely applied. In India the special executive powers are far-reaching and all-embracing and they have the background of an autocratic government.

Apart from the safeguards the Act protects vested interests, prevents ministers from touching the major part of the revenues or dealing with the services, thus making it impossible for them to tackle any major problem. Because of this the whole Act must go to ensure progress.

Despite this the Congress decided to accept ministries if it was assured, even in the limited sphere of partial provincial autonomy, that the special powers of the Governors would not be exercised and the ministers' advice would prevail. Without such an assurance responsibility is farcical and is divorced from all power. Such an assurance could have been given if the British Government's professions were sincere. It meant a liberal interpretation of the constitution. Constitutions are liberalised by interpretation of legislation. We offered the former and simple method although it would be temporary for no amount of interpretation could finally reconcile us to what was inherently bad. Still it might have been afforded some limited scope. The British Government's reaction is characteristic. They told us in their usual way that they will do just what they like regardless of millions of Indian

1. Message to *News Chronicle*, Allahabad, 16 April 1937. *The Leader*, 20 April 1937.

voters. They have appointed puppet ministers representing nobody and knowing they cannot face the legislatures they refuse to summon them. This is the way autocrats, afraid of the peoples' representatives, have always acted and this is the way, history tells us, that leads to revolution. Lord Zetland's recent speech is an invitation to the Indian people to get rid of the incubus, that is, British imperialism which, whatever its professions, acts in the old autocratic and domineering way. Some people live in the hope of divisions in the Congress ranks and the weakening of Indian opposition to British imperialism.[2] They hope in vain. The Congress will face the future struggles as it has faced those of the past with confidence and unity always remembering that its mission is to achieve the independence of the Indian people.

2. Jawaharlal had reasons for this assumption. Lord Zetland wrote privately to the Viceroy on 5 April 1937: "We will see that no opportunity of reopening conversations with the leaders of the Congress in the provinces is allowed to slip by unheeded by the Governors... In this connection do you think that there is any definite step which might be taken, not necessarily by all six Governors simultaneously, with a view to detaching the more reasonable Congressmen gradually from their allegiance to the caucus?"

26. To Agatha Harrison[1]

Allahabad
April 18, 1937

Dear Agatha,

I have not written to you for several weeks, although much has happened during this interval. Perhaps you know that I have not been keeping well. Nothing much is the matter with me but I have been partly incapacitated during the last three weeks from taking my normal part in political happenings. I am better now though still rather weak.

Indira has written to you after her arrival. It is good to have her. Early next month we hope to go to Burma.

I received Carl Heath's cablegram urging the Congress leaders to meet the Viceroy. As I have said above, I have been largely out of the picture during the past two or three weeks. But it seems to me that

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

there is not the faintest chance of the Congress leaders asking for interviews with the Viceroy. You must remember that the Congress is a big democratic organisation and it cannot be twisted in any direction at the will of one or more of its leaders. Apart from this what are we to talk about with the Viceroy if we meet him? There is no common ground that I can see. Viceroys and Secretaries of State will have to learn how to behave themselves before decent Indians can go anywhere near them. There are no signs of this behaviour.

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

27. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
April 21, 1937

My dear Krishna,
I have not been writing to you for some time. This is no doubt due to my ill health, but do not imagine that I have been very ill. At first there was some suspicion of typhoid but that seems to have been wrong. I do not think there was anything seriously the matter with me, but somehow I felt thoroughly exhausted and could hardly do anything. I am slowly getting back to form. But it will take a little time before I am fit again. Early next month I hope to go to Burma for a fortnight and it is just possible that I might go further to Malaya for a week. I shall treat this more or less as a holiday, though there will be work to do and many engagements. Indira will go with me.

I am not writing to you about the political developments. There is nothing very new to write. So far as we are concerned there has been no change in our position or attitude and there is likely to be no fundamental change. As you know the government is not having meetings of the new assemblies where the Congress has a majority.[2] But

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. In spite of repeated demands by the elected members, the *ad interim* ministries in these provinces declined to convene the legislatures.

none the less these members are going to meet and carry on with part of their programme. This kind of parallelism must inevitably lead to some conflict, though this may be delayed.

There is a meeting of the Working Committee here next week. It was to have been held in Wardha but because of my ill health they have changed the venue.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

28. To Horace Alexander[1]

Allahabad
April 21, 1937

Dear Alexander,
Forgive me for the delay in acknowledging your letter and the account which Allen and Unwin sent. Ever since my return from Delhi I have been more or less unwell and laid up. I do not know what the matter was with me unless it was just accumulated fatigue.

The political situation in India seems to have attracted some notice in England which is surprising enough. But as usual the press in England has expressed surprise at the way we refused to play the game. I am afraid that those who apply the tactics of the ostrich are likely to receive many more surprises in the future.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Horace Alexander Papers, N.M.M.L.

29. To H.N. Brailsford[1]

Allahabad
April 22, 1937

My dear Brailsford,

This is a very belated acknowledgement of the greetings that you and Clare Leighton[2] sent to me some months ago. You will, I hope, forgive me for this delay. During the early part of the year I was continually moving about electioneering and for some weeks now I have been, more or less, confined to bed. Nothing much has been the matter with me. I imagine it is just accumulated fatigue. I have been grossly misusing my poor body during the past year and taking pride in the fact. The body has rebelled but we are coming to terms again.

Because of my illness I have been largely out of the recent controversy about the constitutional crisis in India. I could not wholly keep out of it, for my mind would insist on thinking about it. Out of the crowds of legal and other statements that have been made the obvious fact stands out that the conflict inherent in the Act has taken immediate shape. There is going to be no peace in India with this Act. We surprise people in England often enough and are told by them that we do not play the game. But the surprise comes to them because they do not follow what is happening in India or rather they deliberately ignore it till their attention is forced to it. And when the games are fundamentally different they cease to be games.

One of the most promising signs in India today is the ferment among the Muslim masses and intelligentsia. There is a general feeling among them that they have been led astray by their communal leaders. Strenuous efforts are being made to keep them away from the Congress and you must not be surprised if you read occasionally of Hindu-Muslim riots.

There are of course obvious differences between different groups in the Congress but the common bonds are stronger and we all realise that we must pull together. Whenever a conflict threatens, our old friends, the Liberals, immediately line up with the opposite party. But I must not write any more now. I really wanted to thank you and Clare Leighton for the beautiful card of greetings that you have sent me.

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1899); a well-known American engraver and painter.

30. To William B. Benton[1]

Allahabad
April 22, 1937

Dear Mr. Benton,[2]
I was glad to receive your letter from a steamer on the Irrawaddy in Burma. It was a pleasure to meet you here. I do not know that I succeeded much in placing the Indian viewpoint before you. India is a big country and her problems are complicated like the problems of all countries today. And yet essentially they resolve themselves into certain simple and fundamental issues. Already, as you may have seen, a kind of constitutional crisis has arisen over the new constitution. We are in a curious position. We have big elected majorities but they may not function and puppet ministries representing minorities or tiny groups function and the government does not even convene the new legislatures because to do so would be to invite defeat....

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. (1900-1973); American publisher and advertiser; later a Democrat politician.

31. To W.P. Crozier[1]

Allahabad
April 22, 1937

Dear Mr. Crozier,[2]
I must thank you for your letter of the 11th March and the two copies of the *Manchester Guardian* which you were good enough to send me. I am sorry for the great delay in acknowledging them. But for more

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (1879-1944); editor, *Manchester Guardian* from 1932 till his death.

than three weeks now I have been unwell and mostly confined to bed. I am still supposed to keep away from work, though it is difficult to do so entirely.

I have read your articles about the Indian situation with interest. Since then, of course, much has happened and many fresh developments have taken place. Many people in India and England have expressed their views on the situation. I am sorry that I am not well enough to write to you at any length at present. But one thing I should like to say. Our friends in England dislike the Indian problem and try not to think of it as far as they can help it. They avoid consideration of it because the only way out of the difficulty is not to their liking. Having put the subject out of their minds they are taken by surprise when something forces them to think about India. They have not taken the trouble to see the natural course of developments in India or the various forces at play. They take an exceedingly superficial view derived from a few persons at the top and when this view does not fit in with subsequent events they are angry with us. Nothing has happened in India in recent months which any competent observer could not have prophesied. And yet extreme surprise is expressed at developments in India. These developments may be on right or wrong lines, but they were not surprising or unexpected.

What is surprising is that champions of democracy should support the new constitution in India and advise us to accept it as it is, and that they should further support the action of the Governors in appointing minority ministries and refusing to call the legislatures. Democracy when applied to the East seems to undergo a strange sea change in the minds of our friends in England.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

32. To Sir Stafford Cripps[1]

Allahabad
April 22, 1937

My dear Cripps,
Forgive me for the great delay in acknowledging your letter[2] and the splendid telegram you sent me to Delhi. Soon after my return from Delhi I fell ill and ever since then I have been more or less confined to bed. I am however much better now, though I still feel weak.

You will have followed no doubt the political developments in India. Behind the legal and constitutional arguments there lies the real conflict and it seems that this conflict is likely to continue in some shape or other. You will realise no doubt that this conflict has come not because of the more advanced left elements in the Congress but because even the central elements could not adjust themselves to the new position. So that while we differed often enough within the Congress, in this matter we have pulled together and we are going to pull together.

I do not know what has happened to the *Tribune*. It has not come to me for many weeks. I wonder if the censor is responsible for this.

With good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter of 3 March 1937 Cripps had hoped that "the elected representatives will work for the establishment of freedom by refusing to partake of the empty fruits of office which can do nothing but poison the pure and free spirit of the Congress."

33. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
May 2, 1937

My dear Krishna,
I have received three of your letters dated the 23rd April and one dated the 24th. I write these few lines in haste as I am just off to Burma....

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

As for the general political situation I shall not write much. You must have seen the Working Committee resolutions. They mean more or less what they say. I think you have misunderstood some of Gandhiji's statements.[2] That is not surprising for he is not very clear. But the fact is that his attitude is stiff, stiffer than that of many other people. In the country a sense of coming struggle is gradually spreading.

I feel very tired after this meeting and I am glad to be off to Burma. I shall not have rest there but it will be a change. It is just possible that I may stay on or even go to Malaya. All this will probably take me a month and I shall be more or less cut off from correspondence during this period—a good thing. Indira is going with me.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. In a statement issued on 22 April 1937 Mahatma Gandhi observed: "What I want before Congressmen accept office is an assurance which I still hold to be within the power of the Governors that they will not interfere with the day to day administration of the provinces. For under the Act, it is not they who are responsible for the administration of the provinces within the sphere prescribed by the Act. All talk, therefore, of the constitutional inability of the Governors to give an assurance baffles me and makes me suspect the motive of the British politicians who have the working of the Act within their power."

34. The Princes and the Federation[1]

The constitutional deadlock that has arisen in India, immediately on the introduction of the new constitution, has brought home to many the real significance of that constitution more than any amount of explanation and analysis. The Act may remain on the statute book yet awhile and the shadow ministries function, backed by British power. But all this is unreality, the land of ghosts and spooks. The reality of today is British imperialism on one side and the Indian nationalism as

1. Statement to the press, Calcutta, 3 May 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 4 May 1937.

represented by the Congress on the other. The Act has no place in the picture and so it is collapsing at the first touch. But we have to hasten this process at either end and so we must remember that the federal part of it still raises its ugly head in the mists of the future. The Congress has directed us to fight this federal structure and to prevent its introduction, for nothing is so bad in the Act as its federal part.

What of the princes? We hear vague rumours of some agreeing and some doubting. These princes, or nearly all of them, have acted during the past years of national struggle as the close allies of British imperialism. Consistently they have been unfriendly to the national movement. Are they going to register another unfriendly act by joining the federation despite the unanimous opposition of political India to this structure? This will be a grave decision for them and they will thus align themselves, even more than before, in opposition to the people of India. There is a great deal of talk of independence of the states and of their special treaties and the like. But the thing that is going to count in future is the treaty that the people of India make with others. The Act will go inevitably with all its hundreds of sections and its special powers and its federation. And so I would ask the princes to consider this matter from this point of view and not to rush in where wiser people fear to tread.

35. The Strike of Jute Workers in Bengal[1]

The tragic incident which occurred in the morning at the Howrah station resulting in serious injuries to two unfortunate youths[2] should provide a lesson for the people who must realise that enthusiasm, although in itself a very good thing, must be kept within limits. The railway authorities should be blamed for having kept the mail bags scattered all over the platform for such a long period which really proved to be the cause of the unfortunate tragedy.

1. Speech at Calcutta, 3 May 1937. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 4 May 1937.
2. While garlanding Jawaharlal at the station a student accidentally fell on the railway track and fractured his legs. A Muslim member of the Barabazar Congress Committee also sustained injuries due to the heavy rush.

The very fact that over two lakhs of people are involved in the jute workers strike is a thing which can be ignored by no one.[3] For the moment the strike may be confined to jute mill areas round about Calcutta but they must realise that it is merely symptomatic of the labour conditions in India. They must also realise how it is influencing the whole labour movement in India, and as a consequence, the other fundamental problem of India, i.e., the agrarian problem. Everybody knows it well that both the agrarian and labour problems are interconnected.

I have carefully gone through their demands. I find it very difficult to understand how any person could characterise these demands as unjust and unreasonable. To my mind the demands are eminently reasonable. It has been stated that even Mr. Fazlul Huq,[4] the Prime Minister, at one stage of the negotiations with the strikers, admitted that the demands of the strikers are reasonable. The Whitley Commission which came to India eight or nine years ago had also recommended, as we all know, most of the things which the strikers are now demanding.[5] I am reminded of the opposition which labour had to face in the early nineteenth century from the millowners in England. The millowners have adopted the same attitude towards the jute mill strikers now. What does all this indicate? It points out that they are afraid of the labour movement in India. But I think if public opinion in India strongly supports these demands of the strikers, and if the public come forward to help them with money, it would be quite impossible for any government to resist their demands.

It is childish to say that the present strike has been engineered by a handful of agitators. A political colour is sought to be given to a question which is predominantly economic. Six months ago, I visited Calcutta when Mr. A. K. Fazlul Huq, at present the Premier of Bengal, saw me and declared himself as a *khadem* of the Congress and even

3. The strike which had started in February 1937 ended in a failure due to the unsympathetic attitude of the interim ministry.
4. A.K. Fazlul Huq (1873-1962); member, Bengal Council, 1913-34, and Central Assembly, 1934-36; delegate to the Round Table Conference, 1930 and 1931; Prime Minister, Bengal, 1937-41; resigned after heading a coalition ministry, December 1941 to March 1943; headed the United Front ministry in East Pakistan in 1954; was a central minister in Pakistan, August 1955 to March 1956 and Governor of East Pakistan, 1956-58.
5. The Commission had recommended standardisation of wage rates in the jute industry in Bengal, recognition of unions, provision for education of the workers and their children, elimination of jobbers for appointment, no dismissal of workers and construction of houses.

wanted money from the Congress to help him in his election expenses. Ministers in this province who secured their elections to the provincial legislative assembly profusely swearing by their solicitude for redressing the grievances of the masses are now behaving in a manner which shows that voices of down-trodden millions do not reach their high pedestal. Or else, how could one account for the astounding *volte face* of the Bengal Premier, Mr. A. K. Fazlul Huq, who after having declared the demands of the strikers as legitimate only some weeks back, should now turn round and condemn the strike leaders as mere political agitators inspired by influences from Moscow?

I should like to put some questions to the Premier. The first is this: Has he the power to deal with these matters? If he claims that he has not got that power to deal with these matters, these being vital matters concerning thousands of people, what earthly good will he be doing by continuing to occupy these ministerial gaddis? Today it is the problem of jute. Tomorrow it may be the agrarian problem of Bengal. You must remember that Mr. Fazlul Huq has succeeded in his election to the Bengal Legislative Assembly on the basis of having a certain agrarian programme.[6] Mr. Huq has such an extraordinary record of effectively changing position one after another that I do not know how far he will stick to that agrarian programme which he and his Praja Party placed before the people of Bengal and because of which he succeeded in gaining his seat in the legislature. I do not know what he is going to do about that programme because it is quite possible that as he has changed in the past his views in other matters, he may also change his outlook with regard to the Praja Party programme. But suppose he sticks to that programme in theory, he may tell us tomorrow, as he is telling us about this jute strike, that although he still believes in that programme he is powerless. So, then, we arrive at this conclusion that he is helpless in giving effect to any major programme. Then what good does it do to anybody except the ministers to stick to their offices? That is a question that you can legitimately put to him.

It is because of this that the Congress demanded an assurance from the Governors that there would be no interference with the work of the ministers, before the Congress accepted office. And they all know that because that assurance has not yet been given the Congress has not accepted office. If the Congress had accepted office they would

6. The Krishak-Praja Party of Fazlul Huq had announced a radical programme of economic reconstruction of Bengal, which included the abolition of the zamindari system.

have functioned as ministers and would not be mere helpless people with whom one could only sympathise. If Mr. Fazlul Huq, on the other hand, says that he has the power to deal with these vital problems then why is it that he does not interfere? That is the question I would like to put to the Premier of Bengal.

This jute strike is important in itself. It is important because it is symptomatic of the labour struggle. It is important because it becomes a part of our freedom movement. And I want you all to help it with money and otherwise.

36. The Constitutional Deadlock and the Constructive Programme[1]

You have no doubt read carefully in the public press the resolution passed recently by the Working Committee on the present situation and the constitutional deadlock that has been created by the refusal of the Governors to give the assurances asked for in terms of the A.I.C.C. resolution.[2]

This resolution clarifies the present position, which has been already sufficiently discussed in the statements issued by Gandhiji and others. It is desirable that full import of the resolution and the future possibilities should be explained to all Congresmen and the public generally so that we may have intelligent cooperation of all in future. What the future may bring we cannot say but we have to be prepared for all contingencies. It is by our organised and disciplined strength alone

1. Circular to provincial Congress committees, Allahabad, 3 May 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 4 May 1937.
2. In a resolution adopted on 28 April 1937, the Working Committee observed: "the pronouncements of the policy of the British Government made by Lord Zetland and Mr. Butler are utterly inadequate to meet the requirements of the Congress.... The past record of the British Government as well as its present attitude show that without specific assurances as required by the Congress, popular ministries will be unable to function properly.... The assurances do not contemplate the abrogation of the right of the Governor to dismiss a ministry or dissolve a provincial assembly when serious differences of opinion arise between the Governor and his ministers."

that we can shape that future. Hence the stress on the constructive programme of the Congress.

Previous resolutions of the Congress and the Working Committee have laid stress on the agrarian problem and on the questions affecting industrial workers. All these together form the Congress programme and all these have to be worked for. Above all I would beg of you to remember the future that looms ahead and to prepare for this. The Congress members of the provincial legislatures must keep in constant touch with their constituencies.

There is one matter which I should like to clarify. The Working Committee, while strongly condemning those, who have accepted ministerships in defiance of the majorities in the legislatures and popular will, has advised that hostile black flag demonstrations should be avoided. This does not mean that such demonstrations are always illegitimate nor is it in any way a condemnation of those of our comrades who have so far taken part in them. Several have gone to prison because of these and our sympathy goes to them. But the Committee felt that under the existing circumstances such demonstrations were unnecessary and that they gave fictitious importance to certain individuals who are styled ministers today. Therefore, they have advised against them and this advice should be followed everywhere in a disciplined manner. At the same time the holding of meetings denouncing the action of the so-called ministers has been encouraged.

37. To E.B. Shawe[1]

S. S. Ekina
May 5, 1937

Dear Mr. Shawe,[2]

Your letter[3] of April 30th reached me as I was leaving for the station and I read it in the train. You have raised so many interesting points

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. A journalist working in New Delhi for the *Statesman*.
3. Shawe had sought clarification on certain statements in Jawaharlal's *Autobiography*.

IN DEHRA DUN, 19 JANUARY 1937

IN DELHI, MARCH 1937

in it that I would like to reply to it at some length. I am afraid I cannot deal with it as satisfactorily as I might have done if I had more leisure.

The story of Motilal Ghose on his death bed was meant to illustrate his intense nationalism (which inevitably took the shape of anti-British Empire) as well as his sense of humour.[4] There was no question of this being his idea of paradise, much less is this my idea of paradise. A nationalist thinks too much in terms of his nationalism and forgets other matters. I am against the British Empire, not because it is British, but because it is empire. Therefore anti-imperialism leads me to dislike the British Empire which represents imperialism in India. But all this has nothing to do, so far as I am concerned, with any animus against Britons or England.

I have often written on the question of independence and Dominion Status. For various reasons I cannot conceive of India having complete freedom within the fabric of the present British group of nations. If the empire goes then this is conceivable but that will be a different type of connection for all the constituent elements. Therefore I stress independence as I must think in terms of the world as it is. A socialist Britain would change the whole nature of the problems and I would like to be in close contact with it.

I think the danger to India from external invasion is greatly exaggerated, either from across the frontier or from across the seas. A close consideration of the problem, in relation to each individual country from which danger is supposed to threaten, will show that there is not the faintest likelihood of it. But, of course, there is the risk and we must prepare for it as best as we can and I think we could put up a good show. Every country has to face these risks today, even the most powerful of them. I do not want a protector of India, for a protector invariably begins to dominate. A country's strength or weakness is a relative factor; it depends on the balance of forces in the rest of the world. Of course we should try to take advantage of this.

As for the frontier, I think that the British policy has been hopelessly wrong and indeed it has an amazing record of failure behind it. Our approach would be completely different—a friendly approach and

4. Jawaharlal had stated in his *Autobiography* that when he accompanied Mahatma Gandhi to meet Motilal Ghose, the ailing editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the latter while blessing Mahatma Gandhi and his movement, added that, "as for himself, he was going away to other regions, and wherever these might be, he had one great satisfaction—he would be somewhere where the British Empire did not exist. At last he would be beyond the reach of this empire."

economic approach. Abdul Ghaffar Khan counts more on the frontier and round about than an army corps. A word from him will go further. Apart from this the only danger from the frontier is a danger of raids. That is bad but not of vital importance. Most of the trouble occurs when the British troops enter tribal territory.

Responsibility and power certainly tone down people in opposition. But the real question is: how are some vital and urgent problems going to be solved? If they are not solved soon the basic trouble continues and the toning down of some people or groups does not make much difference. Others seek to represent those grievances and problems. On the solution of those problems equilibrium is established, and not till then.

You are entirely wrong in thinking that the Congress, or rather the majority in it, merely wanted to find a way out for not accepting responsibility and asked for Governors' assurances for this reason. Most of us expected that these assurances would certainly be given and we were surprised at the turn events took.

No one can say that an individual act of terrorism will never take place. It may be a reprisal, an act of personal vengeance, or due to religious fanaticism. But politically speaking, I think, there is no chance of terrorism playing any part in future.

I do not think that the landlords or capitalists will change heart. But it is quite possible that the pressure of the masses may force them to agree to a change of system. What I pointed out was that the Congress was essentially a nationalist body but it was being influenced more and more by mass elements. Thus economic questions were shaping its policy now far more than some years ago.

There are obvious fascist elements in India today. They may grow. But I doubt if they can keep pace with the growth of socialistic elements. British imperialism, on the whole, encourages the growth of Indian fascism, although there is some conflict between them.

Anglo-Indians are welcome in the Congress. I am sure they will find a proper place in the new order provided they do not range themselves against it.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

38. The Unchanged Policy of the Congress

In the course of his recent speech at the Conservative Association of Oxford University, Lord Zetland expressed a grievance that the Congress had not extended the hand of cooperation to the same extent that the government had done, and that he could not see how the Congress could expect the government to go further in order to meet the Congress point of view, so long as the Faizpur Congress decision to wreck the new constitution was not scrapped.

Lord Zetland, as usually happens with most of the high officials in this country, seems to live in a world cut off from the realities of India.

On your behalf, and as President of the Indian National Congress, let me say that the declaration made by the Congress at Faizpur regarding the new Government of India Act is not going to be withdrawn, whatever happens; the declaration of the Congress that it is not going to work the new reforms will remain.

The Indian National Congress has always stood for complete independence. We want our constitution to be framed by a constituent assembly elected by the representatives of all adult Indians. But, in spite of that, and against the expressed will of the Indian people, this constitution has been thrust on us. We rejected it. Constituencies set up under new reforms framed by the British Government itself had also rejected it by very large majorities. It can indeed be said that the whole country, with very insignificant minorities, have kicked back the constitution which the British Government had framed. That fundamental policy of wrecking the reforms remains.

The conditions which were responsible for that decision at Faizpur remain unchanged and nobody could now alter or deviate from it without the consent of the All India Congress Committee.

There is talk of nearly one thousand detenus being released in the near future. This seems to be an eyewash designed to divert the country's attention from the main problem of detention without trial. So long as there is any single detenu anywhere in Bengal, anywhere in India, or even anywhere outside India, the detenu problem remains and the anger of India about that policy of the government also remains.

1. Speech at Calcutta, 15 June 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 16 June 1937. Extracts.

I am just amazed how such shameful incidents, like the banning of the Summer School of Politics and Economy at Kottapattam[2] and the alleged communist trial[3] at Calcutta, can take place under the very nose of the so-called popular ministers. I just cannot stand the vulgarity of these incidents. They show the new reforms in their true colours in spite of pious professions of interim ministers....

2. The school started on 1 May 1937 by the Andhra Congress Socialist Party and the Andhra Youth League was banned by the government on 19 May 1937 on the ground that it sought to spread communist and revolutionary ideas.
3. Basanta Kumar Joshi and eleven others were tried on charges of conspiracy to propagate the doctrines of communism.

39. On Rumours of Forming Ministries[1]

My attention has been drawn to the publicity that has been given in some Bombay newspapers to certain telegrams sent by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on the 9th March to Syt. Shankarrao Deo and Syt. Gangadharrao Deshpande. I am astonished to find that some people have drawn extraordinary inferences from these telegrams. On the very day that Sardar Vallabhbhai sent these telegrams he wrote to me drawing my attention to a newspaper report about some Maharashtra M.L.As having suggested names for the ministries.[2] He pointed out how undesirable it was for any Congressman to talk in terms of ministries before the question was decided by the A.I.C.C. Previously we had discussed this matter in the Working Committee and deprecated any activity which might lead others to think that any Congressman was eager for office. Some of us, as is well known, were entirely against office acceptance. But all of us were clear that no names should be considered in this connection till the A.I.C.C. had given its decision and we decided that such vague talks must not be encouraged. They were improper and undignified. I issued a statement to the press on this subject

1. Statement to the press, 16 June 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 17 June 1937.
2. *The Times of India* had reported on 9 March 1937 that at an informal meeting, the Maharashtra Assembly legislators had decided that the Congress should accept office and recommended the name of K.F. Nariman for the chief ministership.

at the time.[3] When we saw the press report about the Maharashtra M.L.As' recommendation I was shocked and so were my colleagues, for this showed an eagerness for office which was not to our liking. Sardar Vallabhbhai promptly tried to stop this undesirable tendency by getting into touch with the leaders of Maharashtra and Karnataka. This was in furtherance of our own decision at Wardha. It had nothing to do with any individual. I must express my deep regret at the fact that some individuals and newspapers make serious charges without an atom of justification.

3. See *ante*, item 9.

40. To W.P. Crozier[1]

Allahabad
June 24, 1937

Dear Mr. Crozier,

Thank you for your letter of April 30th.[2] I have been away touring in Burma and Malaya, hence the delay in acknowledging your letter.

You are right in saying that one must not be too severe on people in England or in India who were surprised at recent developments. You are also right in pointing out that some intelligent and important people among my countrymen were equally surprised. What I pointed out to you in my last letter was that many responsible people in England and in India form their opinions about the current situation without any reference to realities.[3] Such a thing cannot happen in England in regard to British politics because of your democratic background, numerous newspapers and other publications and a much higher standard of political education. In India we have not got that background. We have an enormous gap between the very intelligent and important people you mention and the vast number of the lower middle classes, the peasantry and the workers. They live in two worlds apart and fail

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. He had written that it was not only the British sympathisers but also a number of Indians who were surprised over the constitutional deadlock. He thought that many Indians including Congressmen also would be willing to work the constitution of 1935, though they intended ultimately to secure the overthrow of the India Act.
3. See *ante*, item 31.

to understand each other completely. Many people in England inevitably come in contact with a handful of the upper class folk who, though full of intelligence and goodwill, are cut off from the mass of their countrymen, hence their failure to judge the situation.

The Congress has escaped this isolation by its direct contact with the masses. It has at the same time many contacts with the intelligent people at the top. And so to a large extent it can grasp the realities of a situation. Those realities, as you will know, do not depend on pure theory as to what should be, but on many other indeterminate psychological factors.

It is true that there are many Indians in the Congress camp who would be perfectly prepared to accept office under the new constitution if we got the assurances from the Governors which the Congress has asked for.

Indeed that is the Congress position. The Congress is a large organisation with many kinds of people in it who, though often differing themselves, are determined to pull together because they feel that any other course would injure the cause they have at heart. It has a fair number of intellectuals but it feels more and more the vague but nevertheless powerful pressure of mass opinion. It may vary its tactics from time to time but its basic policy has shown, at least during the past seventeen years, an extraordinary uniformity.

I need not assure you that so far as I am personally concerned, in spite of views which you would consider extreme, I can easily conceive of cooperation for the good of India and the world between Indians and Englishmen.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

41. To Agatha Harrison[1]

Allahabad
June 24, 1937

Dear Agatha,
I have got your letter of June 12th with its enclosures.[2] It is a little difficult to write much about the present situation. In a sense it is

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. She wanted a fresh effort by Jawaharlal to resolve the constitutional deadlock.

quite clear and its very clarity has brought out the inherent antagonism that exists in India. What we shall do in the near future I should not like to anticipate. But I do not think it will be influenced much either way by what the Viceroy has said or not said. We are meeting at Wardha on July 5th.

I agree with you completely in theory that it would be a good thing for us to have an accredited representative in London. But who is to be this representative? You see that even a member of the Working Committee who was present in London hesitated to say much. The situation here is often so complex that it is not easy for a person at a distance to understand it or to follow it. So far as I am concerned I need hardly tell you that I would love to pay a visit to the West. This kind of thing invigorates me both physically and mentally. But it seems to me highly improbable that I will be able to do so. It is not impossible, just as nothing is impossible. Ultimately it is a choice as to where one can make oneself more useful.

Indira's health worries me. She has lost weight since she came here. That of course is not surprising as she has suddenly had to face a hot weather after more than two years of a better climate. Part of her trouble, the doctors tell us, is due to her tonsils. So it has been decided to cut them off. I hope this will lead to a permanent improvement in her health. Meanwhile she has been suddenly reminded by the Somerville people that her Latin test has still to take place. Also she must read up a large number of fairly heavy books in English, French and Latin to prepare for the coming term at Oxford.

We are just at present having the hottest of hot weathers. We are on the verge of the monsoon.

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

42. To M.N. Roy[1]

Allahabad
June 25, 1937

My dear Roy,

Your letter of the 16th June reached me last evening, that is, on the 24th. The fault was not yours as the Bombay postmark bore the date

1. Maharashtra Government (D.I.G., C.I.D.) records, File No. 3590/H/II.

17th June. Evidently, *en route* some persons were trying to derive some profit and instruction from your letter. But I am afraid they are a dull crowd and nothing seems to enter their thick heads.

I have seen your draft resolution in the newspapers.[2]

My trip was certainly a success from the political point of view because it shook up the Indians as well as the non-Indian population of Burma and Malaya. From my health point of view it was not such a brilliant success, though I feel certainly better.

Your resolution had not reached the provincial Congress committee office at the time of the meeting of the council and so it was not considered formally. But we had an informal talk about it and the general opinion was definitely against it. This was not so much as regards the particular recommendation that you might make but the line of argument and the language of the resolution. I confess I did not like your resolution at all.

What I said in Calcutta had little to do with the immediate issues before us.[3] I was referring entirely to our fundamental opposition to the new constitution in answer to Zetland's speech. My own opinion regarding acceptance or otherwise of office has not changed remarkably. But it does not depend so much on assurances and the like. In such matters, of course, so many other considerations, apart from pure theory, have to be borne in mind before a final decision is arrived at. I cannot write much about these aspects in this letter. But what you have written has of course to be kept in mind.

My own programme is entirely uncertain. I am going to Wardha on the 1st and likely to remain there for a week. Then I come back to Allahabad *via* Jhansi. I may visit a few places in the U.P. after that. But I am likely to be in Allahabad most of the time. The work at headquarters is heavy and has to be attended to. I do not know when and where it will be convenient for you to meet me. Perhaps a little later we might fix this up. I do not think it will be worthwhile for you to go to Dalhousie to see Subhas. Wait for him to come down.

2. The resolution was as follows: "The United Provinces Congress Committee is of the opinion that leaders of Congress parties in the provinces where the Congress is in a majority should be directed to accept office, if invited by the Governors to do so after throwing out the interim ministries, as no useful purpose will be served by insisting on a formal assurance."
3. See *ante*, item 38

With all good wishes to you and Ellen,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

43. The Working Committee and Office Acceptance[1]

Question: What do you think of the Working Committee's resolution?[2]

Jawaharlal Nehru: Every decision of the Working Committee is a right one. Just as the king can do no wrong, the Working Committee also can do no wrong.

Q: Is the Working Committee competent to take a decision which is not quite in keeping with the All India Congress Committee's decision?

JN: It is always desirable to call the A.I.C.C. and pass a resolution but the time before us was so short, and the issues involved so important, that we had no alternative but to pass the resolution. The resolution itself made it clear that the Working Committee would have liked to submit its decision to the A.I.C.C. but there was no time.

The Committee would certainly place the matter before the A.I.C.C. when it meets next which would be done in due course.

1. Interview to the press, Wardha, 7 July 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 9 July 1937.
2. Reviewing the position in the light of further declarations made by Zetland, Stanley and Linlithgow, the Congress Working Committee in a resolution on 7 July 1937 declared that it would not now be easy for the Governors to use their special powers and hence it permitted the Congressmen to accept office. The resolution said: "Office is to be accepted and utilised for the purpose of working, in accordance with the lines laid down in the Congress election manifesto and to further, in every possible way, the Congress policy of combating the new Act on the one hand and of prosecuting the constructive programme on the other..."

Q: Is the Committee likely to draft any rules regarding the conduct of ministers?

JN: During the last three months, the Working Committee has already passed several rules. But if it finds it necessary it would again adopt additional rules.

44. The Decision to Accept Office[1]

Soon after the conclusion of the Working Committee meeting, I was asked by over-eager pressmen for my opinion on the Working Committee resolution on office acceptance. I told them that I could not say anything about it as members of the Working Committee do not discuss its resolutions. And then I added lightly that for a member of the Working Committee a resolution of the Committee must be right. For him, so long as he continued to be such a member, the Working Committee, like the king, could do no wrong.

I feel, however, that I cannot dispose of this question in this light vein and that I should try to explain the significance of the resolution to my comrades of the Congress. For two or three years now the subject of office acceptance has roused fierce controversy in the country and individuals and groups have debated it and clung stoutly to their respective views. Those views remain much the same, but what lay behind these views? Few, I suppose, objected to office acceptance on principle, and even those who thought in terms of revolutionary changes did not consider that acceptance of office was inevitably and invariably a wrong step. They, and many with them, feared that acceptance involved a grave risk of our getting involved in petty reformist activities and forgetting for a while the main issue. They feared that the initiative would pass from the masses and our activities would be largely confined to the stuffy and limited sphere of the council chamber. It was this risk that induced the Congress, the A.I.C.C. and the Working Committee to emphasise repeatedly that more important work

1. Statements to the press, Allahabad, 10 and 20 July 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 11 and 21 July 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 234-240.

lay outside the legislatures, in contact with the masses. If we remember that and our objective of independence always and work to that end, the risk lessens and we may even utilise the council chamber to this very end.

I have no doubt that the Working Committee resolution passed at Wardha reflects the opinion of the majority of the Congress today. This opinion is in favour of acceptance of office but it is even more strongly and unanimously in favour of the basic Congress policy of fighting the new constitution and ending it. Acceptance of office may be a phase in our freedom struggle, but to end the constitution and have a constituent assembly is our main objective today as it was yesterday. Acceptance of office does not mean by an iota acceptance of the slave constitution. It means a fight against the coming of the federation by all means in our power, inside and outside the legislatures.

All this the Working Committee resolution has emphasised and it has made clear again that we are not going to be partners and cooperators in the imperialist firm. The gulf between the British Empire and India cannot be bridged, our viewpoints and objectives are different. Thus it is not to work the constitution in the normal way that we go to the assemblies or accept office. It is to try to prevent the federation from materialising, and thereby to stultify the constitution and prepare the ground for the constituent assembly and independence. It is further to strengthen the masses and wherever possible, in the narrow sphere of the constitution, to give some relief to them. Let this be borne in mind by every Congressman.

The last three months and more have shown that the Congress was not eager for office and the spoils thereof. Office was ours even without the asking for it, if only we could reconcile ourselves to the prospect. We looked upon this question always from the point of view of strengthening the people for the struggle for independence. We hesitated and tried to clear the way for our work and weighed the advantages and disadvantages. There can be no doubt that these three months have made the Congress position clearer and stronger, and if we accept office we do so for the longer purpose in view and we leave it when that purpose can be better served otherwise.

The Working Committee resolution was inevitable under the circumstances, and I trust that it will be loyally followed by all Congressmen. But to be loyal to the spirit underlying it, we must carry on our work outside the legislatures with even greater energy. We must not lose our sense of perspective. Real strength even for our work in the legislatures, and much more so for the struggle ahead, comes from outside. This is the significance of this resolution as of previous ones.

We have taken a new step involving new responsibilities and some risks. But if we are true to our objectives and are ever vigilant, we shall overcome those risks and gain strength and power from this step also. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

II

The resolution of the Working Committee giving permission to accept office and the consequent formation of Congress ministries in six provinces has created a new situation.[2] Many Congressmen view this with a measure of apprehension, many others expect great things out of this change. Both these reactions are natural. We have swerved off to some extent from the path we have followed for so long and a feeling of hesitation in treading over strange ground is inevitable. Some fear unknown pitfalls, others look forward to an easy march. But all of us, who have deemed it a privilege to serve our country and our people through the Congress, have loyally accepted the Working Committee decision, and in accordance with the traditions of our great organisation, kept faith with each other.

If tried Congressmen feel hesitant on new ground, what of the masses? What do they think of this new orientation of our policy, what do they expect from the Congress now? Do any of them imagine that our struggle for freedom has ended because Congressmen occupy high offices? Do they think foolishly that Swaraj is at hand? They must be puzzled to see some of their old comrades who were in prison with them yesterday, sitting in the seats of the mighty in those imposing structures which have been the citadels of British imperialism. Red-liveried *chaprasis* hover about them and the enervating perfume of power surrounds them. What has happened to these comrades of ours, they must wonder, what strange sea change has transformed the convict of yesterday into the minister of today? Is it that they have forgotten and deserted us, poor starving folk, we who looked to them so hopefully for relief from misery? Or, are they going to lead us to a land overflowing with milk and honey, the happy land of our dreams, so different from our present lot?

2. The Congress formed ministries, in the first instance, in Madras, U.P., Bihar, Bombay, C.P. and Orissa.

Both these pictures would be wrong. We have not left them and we are their comrades as of old. Though some of us may sit on chairs of state, the same khadi covers our bodies, the same thoughts fill our minds, the same goal calls to us insistently and drives us to action. But we are yet far from that goal and the power to mould our country's destiny is not ours yet. There is no Swaraj or Congress raj, though Congressmen may be ministers. And yet we have a new opportunity for serving and strengthening the masses and perhaps easing their many burdens a little. But even that service will depend on the attitude of the masses, on their organised strength and on other intelligent appreciation of what is happening.

It is incumbent on us therefore to go to the masses and explain to them what has happened. The Working Committee resolution must be read out to them and all its implications fully explained. They must understand that while there is this great apparent change on the surface, the old conflict between imperialism and nationalism continues, and in this conflict strength comes to us from them and not from high office. And those of our comrades who are in office today, and who deserve every help and sympathy from us in the arduous and responsible work they have undertaken, will only work effectively if the masses are vigilant and press forward the Congress demands.

I suggest therefore that meetings for this purpose be held all over India, in town and village, on a particular day, Sunday August 1st, when the Working Committee resolution should be read out and explained and, while offering comradely greetings to the Congress ministers, we should pledge ourselves anew to independence and the removal of the poverty of our people. On that day also the flag salutation ceremony should be solemnly performed everywhere. August 1st is a special and significant day for us, a day long dedicated to India's freedom. On that day seventeen years ago the great Lokamanya passed away, and on that very day India launched the noncooperation movement and began wielding that weapon which has strengthened and vitalised our people so greatly. It is fitting therefore that this day be suitably celebrated and we should remember the past and we should look to the future with the same determination which has held us for so long.

A change has come over our provincial government and though this change does not vitally affect the relation of Britain to India, it is right that it should affect all our own countrymen whether they are in government service or not. It is time that every Indian came out on India's side and cooperated with the Congress in the high tasks that it has undertaken. I trust that as an earnest of this sympathy and goodwill every Indian, who stands for India's freedom, will wear khadi,

the livery of our freedom,[3] and will display and honour the national flag. I trust also that the police force, which has so long been hostile to our people, will think in terms of India now and not of alien masters, and will seek the cooperation and goodwill of the masses. The Congress ministers, if they mean anything at all, mean that the interests of these masses will be dominant.

August 1st should be observed not only in the provinces where there are Congress ministries but in other provinces also. In these other provinces the resolutions to be passed will be suitably altered.

3. Commenting on this, Mahatma Gandhi wrote to Jawaharlal on 30 July 1937; "Your calling khadi 'livery of freedom' will live as long as we speak the English language in India. It needs a first class poet to translate into Hindi the whole of the thought behind that enchanting phrase. For me it is not merely poetry but it enunciates a great truth whose full significance we have yet to grasp."

45. On Coalitions[1]

Question: Can the decision of the Congress Working Committee taken at its last meeting at Wardha be construed as permitting the Congress parties in those provinces where they are in a minority, to form ministries, if necessary, by entering into coalition with other parties?

Jawaharlal Nehru: Such an interpretation of the decision taken at Wardha is quite unwarranted. As a matter of fact, the question of coalition for the purposes of accepting offices in the provinces where the Congress is not in a majority, was not considered at all at Wardha, and as such, no decision was arrived at relating to this matter.

The plain meaning of the Wardha resolution is that only the Congress parties with a majority in the provincial assemblies are entitled to form ministries from among their own members.

1. Interview to *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on telephone, Allahabad, 10 July 1937. *Amrita Bazar Patrika,* 11 July 1937.

46. On the Working of the Minority Ministries[1]

We have rejected the new constitution utterly and our policy is directed to end it.

This is the basic fact of the situation and superficial changes in our tactics must not delude anyone by imagining that we are giving up by one iota our policy of ending the constitution. It will have to go and imperialism will have to go from India.

The minority ministries are governing not as democrats, as suggested by Mr. Neville Chamberlain,[2] but as fascists.

Provincial autonomy is a strange and ugly beast which functions just as British imperialism has functioned in India. In Europe this is called the fascist way of doing things, but in India the British Government calls it democracy.

1. Message to a London daily. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 13 July 1937.
2. (1869-1940); Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1931-37, and Prime Minister of England, 1937-40; author of appeasement.

47. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
July 19, 1937

My dear Krishna,

I suppose you were sufficiently put out by the Working Committee decision. Your letter of the 23rd June[2] reached me some little time after I returned from the Working Committee meeting. Not that this would have made much difference. Much that you have said in your letter I had before me. The decision of the Working Committee, though unfortunate in many ways, had become inevitable and it was not possible to resist it. The choice always lies in not changing the decision but in breaking away. And this latter course has far-reaching

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. He wrote that the British Government was anxious to make the Congress accept office and expressed his fear that if the Congress fell into the trap it would ultimately lead to acceptance of federation also.

consequences. However the thing has been done now and it is no good being tragic about it. We, have to make the best of the situation. There are of course plenty of risks and dangers. We have to face them....

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

48. To H. Khan[1]

Allahabad
July 19, 1937

Dear Friend,[2]
Your two letters dated 25th May and 2nd June both reached me. I am sorry for the delay in answering them but I have had to face heavy work here.

As you have perhaps heard, the Congress has decided to accept ministries where it has a majority, so that today in six provinces in India, Congress ministries have begun to function. This is outwardly a big change from the time when these ministers were always liable to be taken to prison. But of course we must not allow ourselves to be deluded into thinking that the Congress or the people of India have got real power. How long these ministries will last and what they will be able to do I do not know. But the future is full of problems.

I received the cablegram about Sardar Teja Singh Swatantra.[3] In this matter we are doing what we can but unfortunately the Punjab is one of our most backward provinces politically speaking.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. He was in Switzerland and wanted to propagate the cause of Indian independence in Europe by working as a representative of the Congress. He also pleaded that a movement should be started to secure the release of Teja Singh Swatantra.
3. (1901-1973); a revolutionary and a communist; after working abroad for a long time reached India in 1934 and remained underground till his arrest in January 1936; during his detention in Campbellpore jail between 1936 and 1942 was elected unopposed to the Punjab Assembly in May 1937; was closely associated with the All India Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party; member, Lok Sabha, 1971 till his death in 1973.
The Indians at Geneva had recommended that Teja Singh Swatantra be nominated as a Congress candidate in the elections for the Punjab Assembly.

I am sorry to learn of your ill health and your other difficulties. I wish I could help you in the manner suggested by you. But Indian newspapers seldom pay their correspondents and it is difficult to get any thing out of them. I have tried this before and failed. I am not connected with any newspapers myself. I shall however keep your suggestion in mind and if an opportunity offers itself I shall write to you. But I see no prospect of success at present...

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

49. Note on the Constitutional Impasse[1]

On April 1st, 1937 Part III of the Act of 1935 was put into operation, and provincial autonomy as envisaged in the new constitution was inaugurated. The parties or groups controlling a majority in the provincial assemblies were then entitled to shoulder the responsibilities of government, in terms of the Act, in all the provinces. In six provinces the Congress assembly parties were in a clear majority over all other parties;[2] in some provinces they were the largest single party. The six provinces where they were in a clear majority (Madras, U.P., Bihar, Bombay, C.P. and Orissa) comprised two-thirds of British India's population. The Congress was thus in a position to undertake, if it so chose, the formation of ministries in these six provinces. In most of the remaining provinces it could have done so by forming an alliance or coalition with another group.

The question of office acceptance and formation of ministries had agitated the Congress for the past two years and a final decision had been repeatedly postponed. After the general elections had brought

1. July 1937. *Eighteen Months in India,* (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 228-233. This was a joint note of Narendra Deva, K.T. Shah and Jawaharlal for the series issued by the National Publications Society.
2. The following number of seats were won by the Congress in the legislative assemblies of the six provinces: Madras—159 out of 215 seats, U.P.—134 out of 228 seats, Bihar—98 out of 152 seats, Bombay—86 out of 175 seats, C.P.—70 out of 112 seats and Orissa—36 out of 60 seats.

striking success to the Congress and the inauguration of the new constitution was imminent, the decision could no longer be delayed. The All India Congress Committee therefore met for this purpose in Delhi in the third week of March 1937 and finally decided to permit acceptance of office in the provinces where the Congress commanded a majority in the legislature, but they made this subject to a condition. Ministries were only to be formed by Congressmen if the leader of the Congress Party in the provincial legislature was satisfied, and was in a position to declare publicly, that the Governor would not use his special powers of interference, or set aside the advice of ministers in regard to their constitutional activities. The all India convention, consisting of Congress members of the various provincial assemblies and members of the All India Congress Committee, accepted this decision of the All India Congress Committee.

In accordance with this direction the leaders of Congress parties who were invited by Governors to form ministries asked for the necessary assurances, and these not having been given, the leaders expressed their inability to undertake the formation of ministries.

The majority party having refused office, a deadlock ensued in these six provinces, and the Governors appointed *ad interim* ministers who had no backing in the legislatures. The legislatures themselves were not summoned as this would have inevitably led to the dismissal of the *ad interim* ministries and a sharpening of the impasse.

During the three months that followed many statements were issued on behalf of the Congress as well as of the British Government defending and justifying the position taken up by each. The controversy was often carried on in legal and constitutional terms but, in essence, the conflict went deeper and represented the antagonism between British imperialism and the desire of the Indian people to be free. By asking for assurances from Governors not to use their special powers of interference, the Congress wanted to develop a convention that the ministers' advice would prevail even as regards these special powers. It wanted a free hand in the provincial government within the limits of the Act.

The Governors' executive powers and functions, according to the Act, are of three kinds:

(i) those to be exercised in the Governor's sole discretion;
(ii) those in which he is to exercise his individual judgment; and
(iii) those in which he must act upon the advice of his ministers.

The assurances demanded by the Congress referred to the first two classes. In the first of these the Governor need not even refer to his ministers, if he so chooses, and can take decisions entirely on his own

responsibility. In the second class fall certain obligations imposed upon the Governor in which he must exercise his individual judgment, but before he does so, he is to consult his ministers. Should the advice of the ministers not be acceptable to him, he can disregard it. The list of matters in which the Governor is entitled to exercise his own judgment is formidable and imposing, and it was an appreciation of this fact that led the Congress to ask for assurances to avoid obstruction and continual deadlocks in the government of the province.

It was stated on behalf of the British Government that such assurances could not be given without doing violence to the Act. The Congress leaders stated that, while they were entirely opposed to the Act as a whole, they did not contemplate amendments to the Act by demanding assurances. Such assurances could be given even within the terms of the Act. Where discretion was given to the Governor he could certainly exercise it in favour of the advice of the ministers, and he could give an assurance to this effect. The Governor was nowhere prohibited by the Act from exercising his discretion in accordance with his ministers' advice.

As the controversy took a legal turn, as to whether the assurances demanded could or could not be given under the Act, Mahatma Gandhi, on behalf of the Congress, proposed that the matter be referred to an impartial tribunal for decision. This offer was not accepted by the British Government. Nor was recourse had to section 310 of the Act, which was framed especially to meet possible difficulties during the transitional period.

As the controversy proceeded there was a slight toning down by interpretations of the original demand for assurances on behalf of the Congress. The British Government also changed their ground by slow degrees and finally took up the position that, though a definite assurance in terms of the Congress resolution could not be given, the essence of provincial autonomy, as envisaged in the new constitution, was the cooperation of the Governor with his ministers.

The position of the *ad interim* ministries was becoming more and more difficult. They were highly unpopular and they had no sanction behind them except the will of the Governor. As they could not face the legislature, the legislature was not summoned in spite of repeated demands from the elected members. Provincial autonomy seemed to be reduced to a farce. It was obvious that these conditions could not last much longer as the legislatures had to be summoned within six months and the budget had to be passed. It was this deepening crisis which led to the largest advance on the part of the British Government, but this advance was accompanied by a broad hint from the Viceroy that if

the Congress majorities persisted in their refusal to accept office, the constitution would have to be suspended under section 93 of the Act in those provinces where the Congress commanded a majority.

It was to consider this situation that the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress met and on July 7th, 1937 it decided to permit acceptance of cabinet responsibilities. It declared that while the declarations on behalf of the British Government exhibit a desire to make an approach to the Congress demand, they fall short of the assurances asked for in terms of the A.I.C.C. resolution. It stated further that it was unable to subscribe to the doctrine of partnership propounded in the aforesaid declarations, and that the proper description of the existing relationship between the British Government and the people of India is that of exploiter and exploited, and hence they have a different outlook upon almost everything of vital importance. Nevertheless the Committee felt that the situation created as a result of the circumstances and events that had occurred since the Congress demand was put forward, warranted the belief that it will not be easy for the Governors to use their special powers. The Committee therefore resolved that Congressmen be permitted to accept office where they may be invited thereto. But it added that it wished to make it clear that office was to be accepted and utilised for the purpose of working in accordance with the lines laid down in the Congress election manifesto and to further in every way the Congress policy of combating the new Act on the one hand, and of prosecuting the constructive programme on the other.

Within a few days of this resolution of the Working Committee, the leaders of Congress parties in the six provinces were invited to form cabinets, and they accepted the invitation. The constitutional deadlock thus ended. Congress cabinets have now been formed in Madras, United Provinces, Bombay, Bihar, Central Provinces and Orissa.

3

THE CONGRESS AND THE MUSLIMS

Indian National Congress met [illegible] 1937 [illegible]
[illegible] acceptable [illegible] cabinet responsibility [illegible] declared that [illegible]
declarations on behalf of [illegible] British Government exhibit a [illegible]
[illegible] appealed
[illegible] asked for in terms of the A.I.C.C

1. The Congress and the Muslims[1]

Mr. Jinnah has in a recent utterance taken exception to my saying that essentially there were only two parties in the country—the government and the Congress—and he has reminded me that there was a third party and that was the Indian Muslims.[2] In the course of his speech he has made some remarkable statements. I am rushing about from place to place in Bihar and can find no time to give the careful consideration which Mr. Jinnah's speech deserves. But the importance of what he has said impels me to steal some time from an exhausting programme, after a very heavy day's work, to offer a few remarks.

Mr. Jinnah, it seems to me, has said something which surely is communalism raised to the nth power. He objects to the Congress interfering with Muslim affairs in Bengal and calls upon the Congress to let Muslims alone. This objection and demand bear a strong family likeness to what Bhai Parmanand has often said on behalf of the Hindu communalists. Carried to a logical conclusion, Mr. Jinnah's statement means that in no department of public activity must non-Muslims have anything to do with Muslim affairs. In politics and social and economic matters the Muslims must function separately as a group and deal with other groups as one nation deals with another. So also in trade unions, peasant unions, business, chambers of commerce and like organisations and activities, Muslims in India are indeed a nation apart and those who forget this fact commit a sin against the Holy Ghost and offend Mr. Jinnah.

Again, who are the Muslims? Apparently only those who follow Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League. When Maulana Mohamed Ali joined the Congress, Mr. Jinnah tells us that he fought against the Muslims. It was a small matter that thousands of Muslims were members of the Congress then and millions sympathised and cooperated with it. Being outside the fold of the Muslim League and not following Mr. Jinnah's lead, they can be presumed to be other than Muslims. Presumably, according to Mr. Jinnah, powerful Muslim organisations in the Punjab

1. Statement to the press, Purnea, 10 January 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 12 January 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 143-148.
2. Jinnah said this at a public meeting in Calcutta on 3 January 1937.

and in Bengal, like the Ahrars and the kisan parties,[3] being outside the fold of the Muslim League, are not really Muslim. We have a new test of orthodoxy.

What exactly Mr. Jinnah would like us, of the Congress, to do with the large numbers of Muslims in the Congress, I do not know. Would he like us to ask them to resign and go on bended knee to him? And what shall I say to the great crowds of Muslim peasants and workers who come to listen to me?

All this seems to me extraordinary and harmful doctrine and most unjust to the Muslims. His reference to a 'third party' is also far from happy or complimentary to the Muslims. Between British imperialism and Indian nationalism he would have them remain as a political group apart, apparently playing off one against the other, and seeking communal advantage even at the cost of the larger public good.

I am totally unable to think along these or any other communal lines, and with all deference to Mr. Jinnah, may I suggest that such ideas are medieval and out of date? They bear no relation whatever to modern conditions and modern problems, which are essentially economic and political. Religion is both a personal matter and a bond of faith, but to stress religion in matters political and economic is obscurantism and leads to the avoidance of real issues. In what way are the interests of the Muslim peasant different from those of the Hindu peasant? Or those of a Muslim labourer or artisan or merchant or landlord or manufacturer different from those of his Hindu prototype? The ties that bind people are common economic interests, and, in the case of a subject country especially, a common national interest. Religious questions may arise and religious conflicts may take place, and they should be faced and settled. But the right way to deal with them is to limit their sphere of action and influence, and to prevent them from encroaching on politics and economics. To encourage a communal consideration of political and economic problems is to encourage reaction and go back to the Middle Ages. It is an impossible attempt, for it ignores realities.

The realities of today are poverty and hunger and unemployment and the conflict between British imperialism and Indian nationalism. How are these to be considered communally?

There are of course many groups and parties and odd individuals in the country today. But, historically speaking, the present contest lies

3. The Krishak Praja Party founded in 1929 by Fazlul Huq.

between imperialism and nationalism. All 'third parties', middle and undecided groups, etc., have no real importance to this historic sense. They have consequently no great strength and they function only in elections and the like and fade away at other times. The Congress represents Indian nationalism and is thus charged with a historic destiny. Because of this, it is the only organisation which has developed a vast prestige in India and the strength and will to stand up against British imperialism. Thus, in the final analysis, there are only two forces in India today—British imperialism and the Congress representing Indian nationalism. There are other vital forces in the country, representing a new social outlook, but they are allied to the Congress. The communal groupings have no such real importance in spite of occasional importance being thrust upon them.

Mr. Jinnah leads a party in the Legislative Assembly.[4] The members of that party have shown the most remarkable independence of each other and of the party. Why is that so? Because no common principle or policy binds them and at the touch of any real problem they break apart. That must also be the inevitable fate of communal parties.

There is no question of dictators and camp followers. The Congress is a democratic organisation with its roots deep down in the Indian soil. Its doors are open to every Indian who believes in independence. For it the dominant issue is that of independence to enable us to get rid of poverty and the exploitation of the people. It may make mistakes but it tries always to think in terms of the nation and in terms of national freedom, and deliberately to avoid a narrower or a communal outlook.

What does the Muslim League stand for? Does it stand for the independence of India, for anti-imperialism? I believe not. It represents a group of Muslims, no doubt highly estimable persons, but functioning in the higher regions of the upper middle classes and having no contacts with the Muslim masses and few even with the Muslim lower middle class. May I suggest to Mr. Jinnah that I come into greater touch with the Muslim masses than most of the members of the Muslim League? I know more about their hunger and poverty and misery than those who talk in terms of percentages and seats in the councils and places in the state services. I have had vast Muslim audiences in the Punjab and elsewhere. They did not ask me about the communal problem or percentages or separate electorates. They were intensely interested in the burden of land revenue or rent, of debt, of water rates, of unemployment, and the many other burdens they carry.

4. He was the leader of the Independents in the Central Legislative Assembly and the official members tried to keep this group away from the Congress.

As President of the Congress I have the honour and privilege to represent the innumerable Muslims throughout the country who have taken a valiant part in the struggle for freedom, who have suffered for the great cause of independence and who have stood shoulder to shoulder with others in our historic fight under the banner of the Congress. I represent the many brave Muslim comrades who still stand in the front ranks of our forces and who have been true to the Congress through the strain and stress of past years. I represent the hunger and poverty of the masses, Muslim as well as Hindu; the demand for bread and land and work and relief from innumerable burdens which crush them; the urge to freedom from an intolerable oppression. I represent all this because the Congress represents it, and I have been charged by the Congress to hold aloft its principles and the torch that it has lighted to bring hope and strength and brightness to the dark corners of our land and to the suffering hearts of our people.

The Congress welcomes all cooperation; it has repeatedly stressed the need for a joint front against imperialism. It will cooperate with pleasure with the Muslim League as with other organisations, but the basis of this cooperation must be anti-imperialism and the good of the masses. In its opinion no pacts and compromises between handfuls of upper class people, and ignoring the interests of the masses, have any real or permanent value. It is with the masses that it deals for it is concerned above all with their interests. But it knows that the masses, Hindu and Muslim, care little for communal questions. They demand urgently and insistently economic relief and, in order to obtain this, political freedom. On this broad basis there can be the fullest cooperation between all elements in the country who seek the good of the people as a whole and their freedom from imperialism.

2. The Need for Greater Contacts with Muslims[1]

Allahabad
March 31, 1937

Dear Comrade,

During our election campaign and subsequently there has been much discussion about increasing Congress contacts with the Muslim masses.

1. Circular to the provincial Congress committees. Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. 1/37, National Archives of India.

Wherever we went we found a willing response from them, an eagerness to hear the Congress message and a desire to line up with our freedom movement. But the lack of previous work among them and the paucity of trained Muslim workers prevented us from taking full advantage of this new interest and awakening. Since then the subject has engaged the earnest attention of leading Congressmen and it has been felt that we must make a special effort to enrol Muslim Congress members, so that our struggle for freedom may become even more broadbased than it is, and the Muslim masses should take the prominent part in it which is their due. Indeed when we look at the vital problems facing the country, the problem of independence and of the removal of poverty and unemployment, there is no difference between the Muslim masses and the Hindu or Sikh or Christian masses in the country. Differences only come to the surface when we think in terms of the handful of upper class people. Even these differences are no doubt capable of adjustment if approached in a friendly manner and with the larger viewpoint always before us.

The first thing to be done is to concentrate on enrolling Muslim members of the Congress. With a large membership, they will inevitably play an important part in the Congress work and will help in shaping the Congress policy. I suggest to your committee therefore to pay special attention to this matter and take immediate steps to organise enrolment of Muslim members. I know that large numbers are waiting to be approached by our workers and will gladly join.

I suggest also that each provincial Congress committee should appoint a special committee to consider and take in hand this work of increasing Congress contacts with the Muslim masses, rural and urban. This committee will not lay down any policy for that is the work of the provincial Congress committee. It will concentrate on the enrolment of members and otherwise interesting the Muslims in the day to day activities of the Congress. These activities will not of course be carried on separately by the Muslims but by Congressmen generally in each particular area.

The office of the All India Congress Committee is starting a separate department for this purpose and we shall gladly help with advice, leaflets, pamphlets, etc. The provincial Muslim mass contacts committees will naturally work under the direction of their P.C.Cs. But it would be desirable if they kept in direct touch with the A.I.C.C. office.

There is one other matter to which I should like to draw your attention. Complaints reach our office sometimes that notices of meetings, etc. are not always issued in Urdu and so many people remain ignorant of our activities and cannot join our meetings. These complaints are

often justified. I should like you, therefore, to impress upon your district and local committees to issue notices in Urdu in all areas where there is an Urdu-reading population. This will apply more specially to the Punjab, Delhi and U.P. and to the larger towns elsewhere.

I shall be grateful to you if you will send our office periodical reports of the work done in this connection.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. Rejoinder to M. A. Jinnah[1]

I am sorry that anything that I have said or done should lead Mr. Jinnah to think that I want to function as a dictator.[2] Far from dictating to others, I cannot even dictate to myself. I am a servant and worker of the Congress carrying out its directions. Personally I find it difficult to think of any question on communal lines. I think on political and economic lines. But I should like to assure Mr. Jinnah and others that the Congress attaches the greatest importance to the building up of a united India and for removing the differences and suspicions which unfortunately separate sometimes various religious groups. To that end the Congress will cooperate with all others but inevitably that unity must have an enduring political basis. It cannot be a unity of subjection.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 25 April 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 26 April 1937.
2. In response to a suggestion by *Jayabharat*, a daily of Bombay, that Jinnah's offer of cooperation should be accepted, Jawaharlal had wired: "Congress is bound by the fundamental policy of independence, rejection of the new constitution and working on mass basis for mass betterment. I am willing to cooperate and discuss with representative individuals or groups on this basis." Jinnah replied: "It appears to me that he has taken the position of a dictator. It comes to this 'accept what I have already decided and then I shall talk to you.' This is not the way to arrive at a settlement."

4. The Congress and the Muslims[1]

For various reasons the problem of increasing the Muslim element in the Congress has recently received considerable attention. This has been so both on the side of prominent Congressmen, Hindu and Muslim alike, and on the part of others who, though sympathetic, have hesitated to join the Congress. There is no doubt about it that Muslim India is in a state of ferment today. The Muslim masses inevitably think more and more in terms of common economic problems and common burdens together with others. As a reaction to these new currents certain prominent Muslims, connected with communal organizations, have tried to dissuade Muslims from joining the Congress and have even hinted at dire consequences and catastrophes if this should happen.[2]

I have no desire to enter into these controversies which tend to become personal and in which irrelevant issues are often raised. It is not, therefore, with a view to controversy that I issue this statement, but I do feel that clarity of ideas is desirable and the Congress position should be clearly understood. I find that even Congressmen sometimes fail to appreciate this and talk in terms of pacts and compromises with Muslims or other religious groups.

The Congress is a political organization dealing also inevitably with economic problems for these problems affect the masses of India more than anything else. The objective of the Congress is political independence, that is, the capture of power by the people of India, irrespective of their religion. Every Indian of the hundreds of millions who inhabit this country must be a sharer in this power and must benefit by the new order that we strive for. For ultimately it is this order, which removes our crushing poverty and unemployment, which we work for. Subjection and poverty are the common lot of Indians whatever their religion might be; freedom and economic and cultural betterment must

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 25 April 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 28 April 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 149-155.
2. Opposing the Muslim mass contact programme of the Congress, Shaukat Ali in a statement to the press issued on 21 April 1937 had warned: "All that is being talked and written in the press about Muslim mass contact and the Muslim League would have been very amusing if it was not so tragic and full of danger. Howsoever Pandit Jawaharlal may be encouraged by what paid or unpaid Muslims may say to him, he will fail unless he meets real Muslims. Efforts like this will only widen the gulf and lead to a fearful catastrophe."

also be the common lot of all of us. In the struggle to obtain this the Congress offers a common platform to all and because it thinks in terms of the masses and their betterment, it goes to them, organizes them, advises them, seeks strength and guidance from them.

The Congress, being a political organization, does not concern itself with religion or connected matters. But religion and culture being important matters in the life of many individuals, it is right that they should want to know how these are viewed by the Congress. Therefore, the Congress declared at Karachi and subsequently, in the clearest language, that the fundamental and basic rights of all Indians must contain provisions for the free exercise of religion, for freedom of conscience, for the protection of the culture, language and script of minorities, and further that all citizens, whatever their religion or caste or sex, were equal before the law and in regard to public employment, office, trade or calling. The franchise must be on the basis of universal suffrage.

This assurance has been repeated in the Congress election manifesto and is the basis of all Congress policy. It applies to all majorities and minorities alike and it is unthinkable that the Congress will ever vary it.

Having given this solemn assurance, the Congress has nothing further to do with religious or cultural matters and it pursues its political struggle. In this political struggle it has gained great power because millions of people have sided with it, approved of its programme, and looked to it for deliverance from their thraldom and misery. That programme was a common programme for all Indians, whatever their religious persuasions may be. The development of the nationalist movement has crystallized power in two opposing ranks, and we have in India today two dominating forces: Congress India, representing Indian nationalism, and British imperialism.

I have often been made to say in the public press, owing to a mistranslation, that there were only two parties in India. That is manifestly wrong for there may be, and are, any number of parties, big or small, important or confined to a handful. But what I have said, and what I think is true, is that there are two principal forces in India today, that of the Congress and that of imperialism. Others incline during a crisis towards the one or the other, or are mere lookers-on and do not count. We have had big crises and conflicts in the past, and as is the way with nations and communities, we have gained strength and self-reliance thereby. Out of a fiery furnace of a nation's suffering and conflict, the Congress has steeled itself and risen higher and higher, strong in the love and strength of our millions. Those who kept out of it and relied on the feeble prop of an alien and vanishing government, remain themselves feeble, without self-reliance or strength, unable

to charge themselves with the energy of a nation on the move.

Strength does not come to a nation or a community from mere numbers, or special seats in the legislatures, or protection given by outsiders. It comes from within and from the cooperation and goodwill of comrades in a common cause. The minorities in India will not flourish by being spoon-fed from above but by their own merits and strength. Can anyone imagine that any majority in India can crush the brave Sikhs, small as they are in numbers? Only a lunatic can think that the Muslims can be dominated and coerced by any religious majority in India.

The time has gone by when religious groups as such can take part in political or economic struggles. That may have been the case in medieval times. It is inconceivable today; the lines of cleavage are different, they are economic. Therefore, to think in terms of communal groups functioning politically is to think in terms of medievalism. And this is the reason why communal groups in India fail so dismally in the political field; they have and can have no common political or economic policy; they split up and are usually dominated by reactionaries. Having no inner strength they look inevitably to favours from the imperialist masters. And what are these favours? A few state jobs, a few seats in legislatures. How does this affect the hunger of the millions or the unemployment of vast numbers?

Realization of this is coming slowly to those who hoped for relief from their communal leaders and so they are turning more and more to the Congress and thinking in terms of political and economic power.

We talk of approaching the Muslim masses. That is no new programme for us although the stress may be new. That is part of our principal programme of developing increasing contacts with the masses, whether they are Hindu or Muslim, Sikh or Christian or any others. The religion of all these is their personal matter which the Congress guarantees. But we think of them not as religious units but as suffering units of the hungry Indian masses who cry loudly for succour.

It must be remembered that the Congress has always had large numbers of Muslims in its fold, and larger numbers have sympathized with its activities. Some of the most eminent of our national leaders have been and are Muslims. But it is true that the Muslim masses have been largely neglected by us in recent years. We want to repair that omission and carry the message of the Congress to them. Why do others object to this? If they disagree with the political or economic policy of the Congress, they are at perfect liberty to place their policy before the masses. But it is to the masses that the appeal must be made.

This is important, the appeal to the masses. Our problems cannot be solved, we hold, by a few people at the top. And that is why we have lost faith in the old style all parties conferences, in a few persons, representing communal organizations with no common political background, meeting together and discussing and quarrelling. We have had enough experience of these in the past, and that experience does not call for repetition. We are, of course, always willing to discuss our problems with all who earnestly desire their solution, whether they agree with us or not. But the way to a solution is not through a so-called all parties conference.

Those who talk of the Congress entering into a pact or alliance with Muslims or others, fail to understand the Congress or the new forces that are moving our people. We have already made a great pact among our people, a great pact among ourselves, among all who desire national and economic freedom, to work together to this common end. The Muslims are in this pact just as the Hindus and Sikhs and so many Christians. They are there as Indians, and if they have problems *inter se*, as they must have occasionally, they will discuss them and decide them democratically within the great organization which has come to represent to such a remarkable degree the will of the Indian people. Is it not better and more dignified to do this than to seek favours from and take deputations to our alien rulers who dominate over us, and seek to play off one against the other?

When we have gained our freedom, that is the only possible and democratic way for us. And even now, in the course of our struggle for freedom, that is the only way.

Some people suggest that semi-communal nationalist parties should be formed, like a Muslim Congress party. That seems to me a wrong course and one which will encourage communalism and injure the larger cause. Our experience of the Nationalist Muslim Party[3] in the past was not a happy one. Such half-way groupings confuse the issue and the masses are perplexed. Those who disagree with the Congress will, of course, form their groups and parties. But those who agree should not stand on the doorstep; they should enter the nation's chamber and take full share in shaping the nation's policy. There are many today who talk vaguely of being Congressmen and of being in favour of independence. But they work through other and communal organizations and waste their strength thereby.

3. The All India Nationalist Muslim Party was founded in July 1929 to promote a spirit of nationalism among the Muslims and foster healthy relations among different communities.

The crisis deepens and the people of India will soon have to take many fateful decisions. Already these petty and unreal problems, communal and the like, shade off into the background and the real issues, pregnant with destiny, overshadow India and the world. What will our answer be whether we are Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs or Christians? Shall we stick to our little ways, lost in a wilderness of pettiness? Or will we, united and firm of purpose, take the shaping of events in our strong hands and make the history of our choice?

5. The Congress and the Muslims[1]

I have read Mr. Jinnah's latest statement[2] with care. I agree with him that the Muslim League is a political organisation and often acts on the political plane. But because it is confined to a religious group it is, like others of its kind, essentially a religious or communal organisation. I can fully understand and appreciate a religious or cultural organisation acting on a religious or cultural plane only. I can also understand a political organisation acting politically, whatever its view might be. But to mix the two is to create confusion and prevent the proper decision of any issue. Mr. Jinnah tells us that the Muslim League is a political organisation and its policy and programme differ in vital respects from that of the Congress. The mere fact that a person is born to or professes the faith of Islam does not surely mean that he must also conform to the political policy and programme of the Muslim League. If he disagrees with that policy, as large numbers of Muslims do, he must inevitably seek some other political organisation whose policy and programme appeal to him. If he agrees with the Congress policy he will join it and function through it politically. That does not mean that he wants the disruption of Muslims. He is merely acting as politically-thinking people act. Obviously there are great differences of political opinion, *inter se*, among Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Parsees, etc.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 2 May 1937. *The Hindustan* Times, 5 May 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 155-160.
2. In his statement of 29 April 1937, Jinnah while referring to Jawaharlal's statement of 25 April said: "It is quite clear that he is talking as if he were a sovereign authority."

Among each of these religious groups one may find Congressmen, socialists, anti-socialists, communists, liberals, direct-actionists, revolutionaries, moderates, extremists, believers in different kinds of economic theory, supporters of the Douglas credit system or any other system. These cleavages of political and economic opinion are rightly represented by political and economic parties in the public life of the country. But to form a religious or communal party, which also dabbles in political and economic matters, cuts across these real cleavages of opinion on live issues and thus is an unreal party in the political sense. Or else it partly represents, as the Muslim League or Hindu Sabha or Sikh League may claim to represent, a certain section of a religious group which holds by certain political and economic theories. But even this it does not do with clarity and precision as it is always talking in terms of a religious group which, by its very nature, is a politically mixed one.

I do not agree with the policy of the Liberal Party but I can understand it. It is a political party which bases its appeal on a certain political theory and its doors are open to all, Hindus or Muslims or others, who agree with that theory. Not so the Muslim League or the Hindu Sabha.

Mr. Jinnah has failed to understand me if he thinks that I am out to destroy other parties. But, because I believe in the Congress policy and programme, I try my hardest to push that forward and to convert all others, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, etc., to that viewpoint. Mr. Jinnah, or the Liberals, or any other individual or group, are perfectly entitled to push their policy forward in the same way. Why then does Mr. Jinnah object to my working among the Muslims for the spread of Congress ideals? The objection is not political, it is communal, and hence the confusion of thought and action. When Mr. Jinnah talks of the Mussalmans, or warns them to do this or that, he is not speaking politically but communally. He is presuming that all Mussalmans must inevitably think on the same political lines and these should be in accordance with the policy laid down by him and the Muslim League. Surely that is a large presumption.

Mr. Jinnah thinks that the Congress policy is wrong and harmful. I think likewise of his policy. We differ. Let us agree to differ and work democratically for the spread of our respective viewpoints. I would gladly welcome Mr. Jinnah as the leader of a purely political party open to all denominations and with a defined policy. Political and economic issues will then be placed clearly before the country and the people of the country, who will ultimately decide these issues, will be enabled to think about them on right lines. To appeal to Mussalmans

or Hindus as religious groups on political matters is obviously the wrong thing. It is the medieval attitude, when politics and economics were in the background, and it cannot possibly fit in with the modern world. It is because of this that I say that I find it difficult to think on communal lines.

It is very unfair of Mr. Jinnah to say that the Congress considers it utter nonsense to safeguard the rights and interests of the minorities. The very reverse of this is true. In so far as religious and cultural and linguistic rights are concerned (and these are generally considered to be the basic minority rights) these have been amply safeguarded by the Congress as far as solemn declarations can safeguard them. There may be other questions which require consideration, and certainly occasions have arisen in the past and will arise in the future, in this imperfect world, when political adjustments are desirable in regard to minorities. The Congress is fully alive to this and is always ready, when such occasions offer themselves, to help in bringing about such an adjustment. But political adjustments must be in consonance with a basic political policy. To have a relatively minor adjustment at the expense of fundamentals is not an adjustment; it is the uprooting of the whole structure, a complete loss of equilibrium.

The Congress does not and cannot accept the Communal Award because it is a negation of our fundamental principles of democracy and of a united India. It is incompatible with freedom. But Mr. Jinnah knows that the Congress policy is to get it altered in cooperation with, and with the goodwill of, the communities concerned.

When Mr. Jinnah says, quite rightly, that the Muslim League differs in vital respects from the Congress in political matters, does he expect the Congress, including the Muslims who agree with the Congress, to give up its policy, in deference to the Muslim League, a policy which has been a beacon-light to us and to millions in this country these many years, and for which so many of us have gone repeatedly through the valley of the shadow? Mr. Jinnah knows that in the hour of our trial when we faced the might of a proud empire, many prominent leaders of the Muslim League sought alliance with the die-hard leaders of the Conservative Party in England, than whom there are no greater enemies of Indian freedom. Are we to submit to them now, we who have refused to submit to the embattled power of that empire, and who prepare afresh for fresh trials and tribulations in the struggle for independence which has become the life-blood of all our activities?

Mr. Jinnah refers apparently to my faith in socialism. It is true that I desire to put an end to imperialism all over the world and I look forward to the establishment of a socialist state not only in India but

elsewhere also. I believe in a world order based on the principles of socialism, and I am convinced that only thus will the distempers and miseries that afflict us find final burial. But the Congress is not committed to this creed or policy. Nevertheless the Congress thinks and acts in terms of the masses, Hindu or Muslim or other, seeks strength from them, and determines its policy with reference to them. Therefore it considers that even political adjustments with minorities will have a surer and more real basis if the masses are enabled to have their say in the matter.

Do I talk like a dictator or a sovereign authority? It is for others to judge. But may I venture to say that Mr. Jinnah, when he objects to our carrying on our ordinary political work among Muslims or issues mandates and warnings to Mussalmans as a whole, regardless of their political opinions or affiliations, adopts an attitude which may, without impropriety, be called dictatorial?

6. On the Press Attacks on Jinnah[1]

I have been greatly pained to learn that some Gujarati papers have been making unseemly attacks against Mr. Jinnah and other Muslim League leaders. Personally I am not reading these papers and do not know Gujarati. I, therefore, had no knowledge of this.

But if this is true, it is entirely unseemly and will injure our cause.

The discussion between myself and Mr. Jinnah is one of principle, having nothing to do with personalities.

I know Mr. Jinnah since many years and have respect for him. But in certain matters he holds one view, I hold another. It is but meet that each one of us places his viewpoint before the public coolly so that it also may think over these important things. If the press or some others plunge into personalities and fling abuses at one another, no deliberation on these important matters will be possible.

And even so, this is not gentlemanliness; it creates wrong sentiments. Those who do so, injure the Congress. I can say with confidence that

1. This statement to the Rangoon correspondent of the *Muslim Gujarat*, a weekly published from Surat, was published in *The Bombay Chronicle*, 23 May 1937.

no Congress leader approves of this. I apologise to Mr. Jinnah, on my own as well as my colleagues' behalf.

7. To Mohanlal Saxena[1]

Allahabad
22-6-1937

My dear Mohanlal,

Yesterday we were talking about Sherwani's[2] election. I think that he can be helped greatly by Ashraf visiting his constituency for a short while. Ashraf knows that area well and is popular among the workers there I might also be able to induce Muhammad Miyan[3] (son of the late Vilayat Hussain of Allahabad) to visit Jhansi. I think you might mention this to Sherwani and suggest to him that he might invite both Ashraf and Muhammad Miyan to help him in his work. I do not think I shall be able to spare Ashraf for more than three days. How long Muhammad Miyan will be able to remain there I cannot say.

I make the above suggestion remembering what you said yesterday about Ashraf perhaps alienating some Muslims by some views of his. I do not think that makes any difference in this present case. Apart from that the complaint against him seems to me to be largely based on a persistent propaganda carried on by some Urdu papers and people like Shaukat Ali and others who do not like him at all. He has been particularly careful not to hurt the religious susceptibilities of anyone. He has just returned here after his very successful tour in the Punjab.

Ashraf and Muhammad Miyan might go together to Jhansi for three days or so. The two will just balance each other.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 249, N.M.M.L.
2. N.A.K. Sherwani (1887-1956); joined the Congress in 1921; defeated in the election to the provincial assembly, 1937; elected member, U.P. Assembly, 1946; Minister of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry in U.P., 1946-51.
3. Maulana Muhammad Miyan Farruqui (b. 1904); a Congressman from Allahabad; president, Allahabad City Congress Committee, 1947; member, Rajya Sabha, 1952-64.

8. To Rafi Ahmad Kidwai[1]

Allahabad
June 23, 1937

My dear Rafi,
I presume you are in charge of Sherwani's election campaign and are taking all necessary steps in the matter. Nisar is not a very pushing person and therefore much will have to be done for him by others. There is no lack of people who are prepared to help him. For instance, from Allahabad you can draw upon Ashraf, Muhammad Miyan, Muzaffar Hussain and one or two others. As I told Mohanlal I shall visit Jhansi on my way back from Wardha on the 8th and 9th.

I am sorry to learn that you are again unwell.

Yours,
Jawahar

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 245, N.M.M.L.

9. To Mohanlal Saxena[1]

Allahabad
June 23, 1937

My dear Mohanlal,
I understand that Sherwani is lying unwell in Cawnpore. He has written a dismal letter to a person complaining that people are not helping him. As a matter of fact there are a number of people who are prepared to help if they are asked to do so. Three or four Mohammedans are prepared to go from here and they are good workers. Sherwani, I am afraid, thinks too much of the *maulvi* type of individuals. He is likely to lose his election if he thinks too much of *maulvies*. I wish you would shake him up a little. Probably on my return from Wardha Narendra Deva might also accompany me.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 247, N.M.M.L.

10. To Khaliquzzaman[1]

Allahabad
June 27, 1937

My dear Khaliq,

Yesterday afternoon I read a statement in the *Khilafat* newspaper dated 25th June regarding the Bundelkhand bye-election.[2] This statement was signed by six or seven persons including you. I read it with amazement. I could never have associated your name with a document of this kind. Under any circumstances this would have been difficult to believe, but after our talk in April last, I could hardly believe my eyes. During the last two months or more I have been rather out of touch with current events in India, partly because of my illness and partly because of my absence. But the course of events does not make much difference to principles and what you are reported to have done in the *Khilafat* strikes at the very root of those principles. We may have differed in the past as to the kind of activity we should indulge in, but I had always thought that there was a similarity in our general outlook. It appears that I was mistaken. So far as I am concerned I have carried on in the past and I shall carry on in the future thinking more of the principles I cherish than of the results that may follow from my actions. Without that basis of thought and action, I would become a straw upon the waters, blown about hither and thither, without rudder or compass. I have found life often enough a heavy burden to carry, but I have had some consolation from the fact that I have tried to adhere to some fixed principles.

I am deeply grieved at what you have done or what you are reported to have done. I owe it to you to let you know how I feel in the matter. I had thought, and I think I had a right to expect, that you would take no such step without reference to me. Your assurance stuck to my mind and I valued it. Now that this assurance has gone, it is natural that I should experience some kind of a shock.

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 264-265.
2. The statement read: "...Mussalmans should unite among themselves as they have been ordered to do by God and His Prophet to support the Muslim League candidate to give a crushing reply to the non-Muslim organisation so that in future it will not dare to interfere in the affairs of Mussalmans."

This letter is entirely a personal one. Politically, I had no business to write it.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

11. The Communal Approach of Jinnah[1]

Mr. M. A. Jinnah rightly pointed out in a statement some time ago that the Muslim League was a political body and that its policy and programme were very different from those of the Congress. I welcomed that statement for it cleared the issues and every person could choose according to his political and economic predilections. Today I have read an appeal issued by Mr. Jinnah with astonishment.[2] This appeal is addressed to the voters of the Jhansi-Jalaun-Hamirpur Muslim rural constituency where a bye-election is taking place for the provincial assembly. Two candidates are in the field—the Cangress candidate, Mr. Nisar Ahmad Khan Sherwani, and the Muslim League candidate, Mr. Rafiuddin.[3] Both the organisations and candidates are perfectly justified in appealing to the electorate and placing their programme before it. The leaders of the Muslim League have issued many such leaflets and appeals. I have read some of these but in none of them have I found any reference to a political or economic issue. The cry raised is that Islam is in danger, that non-Muslim organisations have dared to put up candidates against the Muslim League. Every organisation, other than the Muslim League, might thus become a non-Muslim organisation even though it may have Muslim members, even though the eminent divines of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema[4] support it. Is this the way political elections

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 30 June 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 1 July 1937.
2. "The Muslim League has been established with a view to coordinate the actions of Muslims according to the dictates of Allah and Holy Koran... By defeating the Congress candidate, let us give them such a crushing reply that those non-Muslim organisations never dare to interfere in problems which concern our religion and community alone."
3. Rafiuddin Ahmed, an advocate of Banda.
4. The Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind was founded in November 1919 by the Ulema from Deoband and was in favour of cooperation with the Congress.

are fought? Is this the way to raise the political consciousness of the masses and lead them to a consideration of our urgent problems? Is it thus that we teach them to look upon our demand for political freedom, our urgent need to end poverty and unemployment? Are not Muslims interested in their problems; are they not terribly poor? How does the Muslim League's communal appeal help the Muslims to get rid of these burdens?

Mr. Jinnah has capped the sheaf of Muslim League leaflets and statements by his appeal in his capacity as the president of the Muslim League. He appeals in the name of Allah and the Holy Koran for support for the Muslim League candidate. Mr. Jinnah knows well that many eminent Muslims including leaders of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema like Maulana Husain Ahmad[5] are supporting the Congress candidate. Have they ceased to be Muslims because of this?

Victory and defeat in elections are often all temporary incidents in our public and private lives. To each of us they come alternately and we accept them with a measure of equanimity and continue to work for the cause we hold dear. But there are certain principles which are greater than election victories and defeats and it is as well that we do not forget them in the excitement of an election. To exploit the name of God and religion in an election contest is an extraordinary thing even for a humble canvasser. For Mr. Jinnah to do so is inexplicable. I would beg him to consider this aspect of the question and to realise that this is communalism in excelsus. It means rousing religious and communal passions in political matters; it means working for the Dark Age in India. Does not Mr. Jinnah realise where this kind of communalism will lead us to?

We have tremendous problems, political and economic, to face and solve today. The rest of the world, in spite of its tragic preoccupations, is looking to India and watching our decisions. What is Mr. Jinnah's answer to this, what does he say to these questioning eyes from afar? In his appeal to the voters he does not make a single reference to politics or economics. His appeal is purely communal. What will the world and India think of these politics of the Dark Ages?

I want Nisar Ahmad Sherwani to win because he is a fine upright man and he stands for Congress principles, for Indian freedom and for the ending of exploitation in India. But much as I want him to win I would rather wish that he lost the election and that we lost a hundred and a thousand elections, than that we based our appeal to the public

5. Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani (1879-1957); prominent leader of Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind; imprisoned several times during the freedom movement.

on communal grounds and exploited the name of religion for our purposes. I hope that every Congress candidate and every Congress worker will stick to his principles and not stoop in an endeavour to win a cheap election triumph. We look far, we have to march a long distance. Not by stooping will we do so, but we will do so with our heads high and with a straight back and by adhering to the cause of the masses for whose betterment we labour.

12. To N.A.K. Sherwani[1]

Allahabad
30-6-1937

My dear Nisar,

For some days past I have been trying to find out what has been happening in your election. Today at last on Ashraf's return I have had some news. I want to tell you that we regard your election campaign as a most important one and I hope you and all Congressmen in Bundelkhand will realise this fact and do their utmost in it. I am tired of electioneering and touring. But I shall give you two full days, July 11th and 12th. I shall start from Allahabad on the night of the 10th and go to Jhansi or any other place that you want me to go. Will you please draw up my programme in consultation with Atmaram Kher[2] and others and let me know what it is?

I am going to Wardha tomorrow and I shall try to induce Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Abdul Ghaffar Khan to visit your constituency. But I am doubtful if they will come. Anyhow I hope to send you their messages. Syed Mahmud might visit you.

Muzaffar Hussain, Abdul Moid[3] and Sadiq Ali are going with this letter. Sadiq Ali is going direct to Hamirpur. He has spent two years there and he should prove a very valuable worker. He knows the

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 231, N.M.M.L.
2. Atmaram Govind Kher (b. 1894); a leading Congressman of Jhansi; suffered imprisonment several times during the freedom struggle; minister, U.P. Government, 1946-52; Speaker, U.P. Assembly, 1952-62 and 1969-74.
3. Syed Abdul Moid, imprisoned several times during the freedom movement; general secretary, Allahabad D.C.C., and captain, Congress volunteers corps, 1932-37; died 1973.

Diwan[4] there very well. Muhammad Miyan and Shahid[5] will follow soon as well as others. Ashraf can go to you for the last few days of the campaign. So you will have no lack of workers. What is required is proper organisation. Do not waste money on motor cars and the like. Bicycles are good enough. My own experience is that too much money is harmful in election.

Wishing you success,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. Diwan Shatrughna Singh (b. 1901); a Congressman from Hamirpur; was imprisoned several times during the freedom struggle.
5. Maulana Shahid Fakhri (b. 1904); one of the leaders of the khilafat movement in Allahabad; member, U.P. Council, 1937; president, Allahabad City Congress Committee, 1940; member, U.P. Vidhan Sabha, 1952-57; member, U.P. Vidhan Parishad, 1957-66.

13. To R.V. Dhulekar[1]

Allahabad
30-6-1937

My dear Dhulekar,

We are sending some young Muslim workers for Sherwani's election. This election is a most important one and I want all Congressmen in Bundelkhand to realise this vital fact. On its result depend big things. Our success there will be politically helpful for our cause and it will give a tremendous fillip to our fight against communalism. I want you to give all your great energy to this election and I know you will give it once you realise the far-reaching consequences that will follow from it. We shall send a good number of competent workers. I shall also come for two days, July 11th and 12th. It is difficult for me to go out electioneering now but I feel the importance of this election so much that I must come. I am writing to Kher and others too. Please have my programme fixed up in consultation with Sherwani, Kher and others.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 233, N.M.M.L.

I am going to Wardha tomorrow and shall return to Allahabad on the 8th. I shall leave Allahabad on the 10th night for Jhansi or such place as I am wanted in.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

14. To A. G. Kher[1]

Allahabad
30-6-1937

My dear Kher,
We are sending some Muslim workers to Bundelkhand to work for Sherwani. They are good workers. More will follow in a day or two. Muzaffar Hussain and Abdul Moid are going to Orai where they will see Sherwani. Sadiq Ali whom you perhaps remember is going direct to Hamirpur. In another day or so Shahid and, may be, others will follow.

I sent you a telegram yesterday about my own visit. I have now decided to give two full days, 11th and 12th, to Sherwani's constituency. I shall come from Allahabad starting on the 10th night. Please have my programme fixed up in consultation, of course, with Sherwani and let me have a copy of it at Wardha.

I am sure you realise the great importance of Sherwani's election. It has become a test election for us and its consequences are going to be far-reaching, both from the political point of view and the communal. Therefore every Congressman must make it a point of honour to do his utmost in this connection. For a victory for us in this would indeed be a triumph for the Congress and our cause. This is not at all a personal individual affair. I hope you and all our colleagues in Bundelkhand will set to work in earnest and make the whole place hum.

I am going to Wardha tomorrow and I shall be there till the 7th. I shall try to induce Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Maulana Abul Kalam to come also. But I am not sure that they will agree. Dr. Syed Mahmud will probably visit.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 235, N.M.M.L.

15. To Manilal Pande[1]

Allahabad
June 30, 1937

My dear Manilal,[2]
I am glad to learn that you are helping Sherwani in his election. I am writing to you however to impress upon every Congressman that this election is a vital one for us and we must exert all our strength and our organisation to win it. We are sending a number of workers from here. More will follow. So far as we are concerned we shall do our utmost to help Sherwani. I shall visit Bundelkhand on the 11th and 12th for the purpose. This is a test for Bundelkhand and I am sure that you shall come out well through it.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 237, N.M.M.L.
2. (1892-1939); a Congressman of Jalaun.

16. To Khaliquzzaman[1]

Allahabad
July 1, 1937

My dear Khaliq,
I have your letter of the 29th. I have read it carefully and it seems to me that there is a great difference between what you say in this letter and what you told me when we met. It is difficult to discuss this matter properly in a letter and therefore I do not propose to do so. It is obvious that the problem of a minority, religious or otherwise, is always a difficult one and we must apply ourselves to its solution. But behind this minority problem there is yet another—the conflict between the

1. U.P. Government (D.I.G., C.I.D.) Special Branch records—Intercepted letters.

progressive elements and the reactionary elements. The line of action that has appealed to you in the past and seems to appeal to you now is to associate yourself with the communal and reactionary elements in order to make them more progressive and less communal. This may be in theory occasionally a possible policy but all our past experience in India has shown that it ends in one thing—the absorption of the progressive in the reactionary group. It astonishes me to survey this process going on during the last dozen years or so. Today it has arrived at its culminating point and the attitude of the Muslim League is more intensely communal than I could have conceived possible for any organisation. I have no doubt that you were not responsible for the working of the various notices and leaflets that have issued in Bundelkhand. But the fact remains that some of them are issued above your name. That is the pity of it. Today in the eyes of the public you must inevitably stand for the extreme limit of communalism and political reaction. I know you do not feel that way but circumstances have forced you to act in that way.

You are perfectly right in saying that there is more life and bustle in the reactionary camp than there has been in the past. Is that not inevitable when a doomed policy tries to protect itself by all means, fair or foul? And in this attempt to protect itself it has to stoop to highly undesirable methods because it cannot meet the other party in the field of argument. These are always the signs of the fading away of a group which has ceased to have any meaning in real politics.

The identical process has taken place in the political field with the growth of the national movement in India. The reactionaries have joined hands and tried to form a joint front between themselves and British imperialism. Are we then to give up our national movement or to tone it down because reactionaries get frightened and organised?

The Bundelkhand election has a certain temporary value but, after all, it is a small affair and will pass. The Muslim League has a perfect right to put up a candidate to represent its policy. It is not that I object to it but the astounding notices that are coming show the depths to which the League has fallen. Even Jinnah has no other argument left in a political contest but to appeal in the name of Allah and the Holy Koran. A community, majority or minority, which adopts such tactics is in a poor way. Fortunately there are many Muslims who do not adopt these tactics and they will serve their community as well as the larger cause far better. I am rather glad that this Bundelkhand election has thrown this flashlight on the real conflict. That conflict has nothing to do with the minority questions but is a political conflict.

On the one side there is progressive thought in action and every desire to solve the minority problem fairly and in cooperation with those concerned. On the other there is sheer communalism, religious bigotry and political reaction. When such clear conflicts occur, people have to choose definitely on which side of the barricade they will be. They cannot remain in the manger. So far as the world is concerned you seem to have chosen the side of reaction and communalism. If I am grieved at this am I to blame?

From day to day our fight continues and while people talk of offices and the ministries, our young men—Hindu and Muslim—go to prison. The world hovers at the brink of catastrophe and the Muslim League, under its brave leadership, talks in terms of four hundred years ago.

Is the League a democratic organisation or is it not just a close preserve of certain individuals? Why should I accept it as the representative of the Muslims of India when I know it represents the handful of Muslims at the top who deliberately seek refuge in the name of religion to avoid discussing mass problems? I have a certain measure of intelligence and I have studied political, economic and allied problems. Am I to insult my intelligence by talking baby-talk of an age gone by? You know what has happened in the Muslim countries of the West, in Turkey and Iran and Egypt and Palestine and Syria. You know also what Muslims there think of communalism and all its work. Do you not see that this communal policy which the Muslim League here has fathered is a policy more injurious to the Muslims of India than anything that a majority could do would be? It is a doomed policy both from the point of view of the community and the larger world, but unhappily people get wrapped up in little things, in the affairs of the moment, and do not see whither the world is going. It is quite possible that the Muslim League may win a few elections, may rouse up some of the Muslim masses in the name of Islam and the Koran. But is that the way to build up the strength of the Muslim minority in the country or to make it play an effective part in the shaping of India's destiny?

I have given more thought to this problem in India than to any other. I know that it is a difficult problem just as every real problem in life is difficult. I shall do my utmost to help in its solution with the goodwill of all parties concerned. You know me well enough. I hope you realise that personal prestige and the like do not come in my way much. But I cannot have dealings with political reaction, because that means a surrender of all my principles and a divorce from the realities of the situation.

Is it not a strange thing that in this conflict men like Wazir Hasan[2] and Maulana Hussain Ahmad should be ranged on the progressive side and that you should be on the side of the reactionaries? It is not a question of associating yourself with my views or all my activities. Wazir Hasan has not done so. Far from it. But there should be a certain integrity about our politics in public life and if we ally ourselves with those who have not got this integrity, inevitably we suffer from this alliance.

I am quite sure that I have your affection and good wishes as you have mine. I also feel that at the back of your mind you must largely agree with me. And yet fate has so worked that you are working with and helping people against your own wishes and conviction and thus aiding the cause of reaction and bigotry in India.

Indu will be going back to Europe in September. I am going to Wardha today. I shall come back to Allahabad, from Wardha, about the 8th or the 9th.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. (1874-1947); secretary, All India Muslim League, 1912-19; member, U.P. Council, 1915-21; sponsor of the Lucknow Pact of 1916; chief judge, Oudh Chief Court, 1930-34; president, Muslim League session, Bombay, 1936; joined the Congress, 1937.

17. To A. G. Kher[1]

Allahabad
July 1, 1937

My dear Kher,

I have your card. I enclose a copy of a letter[2] I am sending to Sherwani. Please note what I have said there about Keshav Deva and polling day arrangements and the like. I am relying on you greatly in this election and I am sure that you will do your utmost. I have written to various people in Bundelkhand including Diwan Shatrughna Singh. I wish his

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 205, N.M.M.L.
2. See *post*, item 20.

wife, the Rani,[3] would come out and work among the Muslim women. She is an excellent worker and if we could go to the Muslim women and induce them to come to the polling booths we would have many votes. Will you also write to him? Tandonji is writing to him also.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. Rajendra Kumari (b. 1901); a Congress worker of Hamirpur; imprisoned several times during the freedom movement.

18. To Har Prasad Singh[1]

Allahabad
July 1, 1937

My dear Kunwar Saheb,[2]
I am writing to you about Sherwani's election. Banda is not in his constituency. But still I want you to give every help to him in this election. The result of the election will have far-reaching consequences and we must therefore exert ourselves to the utmost. I hope that you will exercise your great influence on behalf of Sherwani actively and give him such other workers as you can. Kher, Dhulekar and others are working hard for Sherwani and we are sending a good number of workers from outside. Keshav Deva Malaviya will also probably go there soon to help in organising. Please do your utmost. I shall visit the constituency on the 11th and 12th.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 203, N.M.M.L.
2. A leading Congressman of Banda; imprisoned several times during the freedom struggle; member, U.P. Assembly, 1937-39.

19. To Rafi Ahmad Kidwai[1]

Allahabad
July 1, 1937

My dear Rafi,

I feel that I am to some extent encroaching on your preserves. I am taking great interest in Sherwani's election and in order to save time I am taking the initiative in making some arrangements. I hope you will not mind. It is obvious that this election is a very important one and will have far-reaching consequences. The way the Muslim League leaders are carrying on is astounding. We must take up their challenge and meet it with all our strength.

For the last week I have been impatiently waiting for news as to what was happening and where Sherwani was and what you had done in the matter. But no definite news came. Meanwhile time flew. So ultimately I sent Ashraf to make personal enquiries on the spot and report to me. He spent three days in the constituency, saw Sherwani, Kher and others and came back yesterday. As soon as I saw him we arranged to send Muzaffar and Moid who went yesterday. Sadiq Ali is going to Hamirpur today. Muhammad Miyan and Shahid will go in a day or so. Others are also going. There must be no dearth of workers. But the dearth seems to be of organisation.

I have written letters to Kher, Dhulekar, Manilal Pande, Diwan Shatrughna Singh and Kunwar Har Prasad Singh asking them to throw their full weight in this election.

I feel that a good organiser is urgently needed there, both for preliminary work and polling day arrangements. It struck me that Keshav Deva might be able to go. He would do this work well. I have just spoken to him and he has promised to go at least for the last week and perhaps more. I am writing accordingly to Sherwani.

I am going to Wardha today, probably returning to Allahabad on the 8th and leaving Allahabad on the 10th for Jhansi etc. I shall spend two full days in Sherwani's constituency. Syed Mahmud will accompany me. I have fixed up with Bhargava for the loudspeakers for those two days. I am writing this to you to keep you informed of what is being done and to apologise for intruding in your and the provincial committee's domain.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, pp. 213-214, N.M.M.L.

Our office has advanced Rs. 100/- to Muzaffar and others who have gone or are going to Jhansi. We have done this on behalf of the P.C.C. In addition Rs. 10/- have been given to Shahid.

I am sending copies of this letter to Narendra Deva and Damodar Swarup.

One thing more. I understand that there are nearly 80 polling booths. We shall therefore require a large number of competent helpers on that day. Keshav suggested that we might ask some of the district committees to send a man each at their own cost for this purpose. To save time I asked him to write direct to such committees as he thought will be able to do so. Such persons will have to come two or three days ahead of time.

Your letter has just come. There was no cheque in it as stated.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

20. To N.A.K. Sherwani[1]

Allahabad
1-7-1937

My dear Nisar,
I wrote to you yesterday and I am writing again. You will see how much I am thinking about your election and how much I wish to help you in this. It seems to me that you will not suffer from a lack of workers. You have plenty of support of this kind. But the one thing that I want to impress upon you is the proper organisation of the election campaign as well as polling day arrangements. Organisation goes a long way. In order to help you purely in the organisational part I am arranging to send Keshav Deva Malaviya soon. He is a good organiser and is acquainted with most of the workers there. I think he will be of great help to you on the organisational side and especially for polling day arrangements which must be clearly thought out. I am not sure when he will reach there but I hope that at the latest he will be there on the 6th or 7th, possibly earlier.

I am told that there are nearly 80 polling booths. This will require a great deal of organising and many competent workers. You will no

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 107, N.M.M.L.

doubt get a good number of workers locally. Still we are trying to get some competent men from other districts especially for the polling day. Keshav Deva is arranging for this.

I am going to Wardha today and shall remain there till the 7th night at least. If there is anything you want to refer to me you can write or telegraph to me at Wardha till then. Remember that I shall do everything that I can do to help you in this election. I shall await in Wardha the tentative programme for my visit to your constituency on the 11th and 12th.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

21. To N.A.K. Sherwani[1]

Camp Wardha
July 3, 1937

My dear Nisar,

I have just received your letter.

I have asked both Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Abdul Ghaffar Khan to visit your constituency but I am sorry to say that both are unable to do so. I cannot, under the circumstances, press them. They have, however, given me a message for you which I enclose. You might have it printed.

You must have seen in the papers my statement[2] about Jinnah's leaflet and his reply. Jinnah says that he has issued no statement of any kind whatever and yet the *Khilafat* prints such a statement and probably leaflets are being distributed containing this. I am issuing a further statement in reply.[3] Presumably Jinnah will explain this obvious discrepancy. It might be worthwhile for you to issue a short notice saying that Jinnah denies having issued any statement in the election and therefore the statement issued above his name is not his. I enclose a cutting from *The Bombay Chronicle* which will give you his statement.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, pp. 105-106, N.M.M.L.
2. See *ante*, item 11.
3. See *post*, item 22.

The programme you have sent for me is not very attractive, and it takes up more time than I can easily spare. Why do you make me start from Cawnpore and return me to Cawnpore? Practically you are taking full three days and two days was as much as I could allow. Please get me back to Allahabad on the morning of the 13th. However I leave this matter to you. Please also remember that too many small meetings are not desirable.

You want various *maulvies* to go to your help. I understand that several are already going. Maulana Husain Ahmad is perhaps the best person you could have to help you in the election. Abul Kalam Azad is writing to Ahmad Said[4] and one or two others. It is right to have these people but if I may venture to say so the correct approach should be on economic lines. It is no good your competing with the Muslim League on its own ground. Choose stronger grounds. I speak with some experience of Hindu and Muslim voters and masses.

Go ahead confidently and do not worry yourself. Pay enough attention to the organisation. This makes a great difference and that is why I asked Keshav Deva to go to you.

In Hamirpur district, as you know, Diwan Shatrughna Singh is a man of influence and can do a great deal. But even a better worker than he is his wife, the Rani. I have suggested that this lady should go round to the Muslim women voters who do not come easily to the polls at all. I think you might write to the Diwan requesting the Rani saheba to take particular interest in the women voters.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. Secretary, Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind for many years; suffered imprisonment several times during the freedom struggle; died 1959.

22. Jinnah's 'Grievances'[1]

Mr. Jinnah has denied having issued any statement to the Jhansi-Jalaun-Hamirpur Muslim voters such as I referred to. I am glad to have his

1. Statement to the press, Wardha, 3 July 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 5 July 1937.

denial. But the *Khilafat* newspaper gives prominence to such a statement and various other newspapers have published English translations of it. I understand that this statement with Mr. Jinnah's name attached to it is being distributed in Bundelkhand. I would suggest that Mr. Jinnah might find out who is responsible for this misuse of his name and should dissociate himself from the statement in question.

Mr. Jinnah complains of misrepresentation of the Muslim League and of himself by many Congressmen and by the Congress press. May I point out to him that there is no such thing as the Congress press in the sense that the Congress owns or controls a newspaper? But if there is any misrepresentation on the part of anyone I am sorry for it and I shall gladly help in removing it if he will point out what and where it is.

To call the Muslim League politically reactionary is a matter of opinion and Mr. Jinnah cannot grudge us the liberty of holding to that opinion. It may be that our standards are different, but surely Mr. Jinnah will not deny that many prominent members of the League have quite a remarkable record of reactionary political activity and of alliance with British imperialism against the Indian freedom movement.

Mr. Jinnah has again told us that the Congress policy of mass contact with Mussalmans is fraught with very serious consequences.[2] Why the endeavour of a political organisation to enrol members should have such dire consequences I do not know. Surely that is the first function of every organisation, and as I have said previously, I think, I would welcome the Muslim League enrolling members for its own programme and policy. Apparently it does not believe in enrolling members or in any kind of mass contacts. The objection, therefore, is to mass contacts as such and not so much to the Congress having them. May I point out to Mr. Jinnah again that this is no new policy for the Congress? During the last seventeen years there has been no period when the Muslim membership of the Congress has not been counted by thousands and tens of thousands. We do not keep separate communal records of members; for us a Muslim or a Hindu member stands on the same footing. But if Mr. Jinnah desires to compare the Congress Muslim membership with the membership of the Muslim League I can have the necessary statistics gathered together. I imagine he will find that

2. In a statement on 1 July 1937, Jinnah had said: "...In my opinion this policy of mass contacts with Mussalmans by Congress is fraught with very serious consequences. There is plenty of scope for Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to improve his own people, the Hindus, as there is a lot of undesirable element among them. Similarly the Muslim League should do the same thing, as there is plenty of undesirable element among the Mussalmans."

the number of Muslim members of the Congress is enormously greater than the total membership of the Muslim League.

I am advised by Mr. Jinnah to improve my own people, the Hindus. Not being religiously or communally inclined, I venture to think of my people as the Indian people as a whole and I act on the political and economic plane. I seldom think, unless I am forced to, of the religious persuasions of people. In my Congress work I have to deal from day to day with colleagues and comrades who are Hindus and Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, Buddhists and Jews, and others who attach no religious label to themselves. May I also add that I am not out at present to 'improve' anybody, although no doubt improvement is often desirable. That improvement will follow on an extensive scale when freedom comes, and therefore I am primarily interested in Indian freedom and the removal of the poverty and exploitation of India's millions.

Mr. Jinnah refers to an interview given by Mr. Kripalani.[3] My colleague is not here and I have not this interview with me but I shall answer the question put to me. The Congress has not agreed to or guaranteed Mr. Jinnah's fourteen points. But the Congress has said that it seeks a change in the Communal Award in cooperation with and with the goodwill of the parties concerned, including Muslims. That is obviously what Mr. Kripalani meant.

Another statement of Mr. Kripalani is objected to. This relates to what happened during the conversation between Babu Rajendra Prasad

3. Kripalani in his interview of 19 May 1937 had said, "Mr. Jinnah's fourteen points (one would have thought they were exhausted) having been granted by the foreign government and guaranteed by the Congress, unless Mussalmans relinquished them voluntarily, may we ask what more is needed?" Jinnah, describing the interview as crooked, disingenuous and totally untrue, wanted to know from Jawaharlal whether the Congress had guaranteed the fourteen points of the Muslims.

and Mr. Jinnah two years ago.[4] I was not in India then and have no personal knowledge, but Mr. Kripalani was in constant touch with developments. The quotation which he gives is not from a press report but from the official Congress publications issued at the time. To verify this matter still further, reference was made to Babu Rajendra Prasad himself. Rajendra Babu stated that not only did he himself agree to the formula drawn up during those conversations, but, as President of the Congress, he assured Mr. Jinnah of his ability to get it accepted and passed by the Congress. Mr. Jinnah however insisted on having the adherence and signatures of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and some leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha. This additional agreement could not be obtained. There can be no doubt whatever that, if Mr. Jinnah had so desired at the time, Rajendra Babu would have secured the assent of the Congress to the formula.

4. In his statement of 24 June 1937, Kripalani said: "Mr. Jinnah has apparently forgotten what took place in 1935. The conferences resulted in substantial agreement on the points discussed. Mr. Jinnah however was of the opinion that Hindu Mahasabha leaders must also agree, and the agreement was not obtained. Mr. Jinnah considered that it was not worthwhile to proceed further with the matter or to give publicity to the substantial agreement with Congress unless the Hindu Mahasabha also agreed."

Referring to Kripalani's statement, Jinnah said on 1 July: "Kripalani referred to my Bombay speech on May 21, in which I said that in 1935 I spent four or five weeks holding conferences with Babu Rajendra Prasad trying to get the Muslim point of view accepted at least by Congress leaders, if not by Hindu Sabhaites. But I didn't succeed....Hindu Mahasabha didn't agree to it since it adopted a different course of action that in India there should be complete supremacy and ascendancy of Hindus."

The talks for arriving at an agreement to replace the Communal Award were held from January to March 1935.

23. To Rafi Ahmad Kidwai[1]

Camp Wardha
July 5, 1937

My dear Rafi,
Your letter was given to me by Pantji. I was astonished to read it and although I am terribly busy here I am hastening to reply to it.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, pp. 21-22, N.M.M.L.

It surprised me how with all your experience of public life you are so liable to such moods and tie yourself up in this curious way. I feel that sometimes you are much to blame because you imagine things and seek no explanation for them. Or some little thing happens which you magnify enormously. Others are of course often to blame also. I am often to blame, we all are. The only possible way to get on in a corporate life is to be continuously in touch with each other, to consult each other, and, if necessary, to quarrel with each other. Danger lies in holding oneself aloof, in functioning separately without constant consultation. This consultation is often not necessary, sometimes it is a hindrance, but in the long run it pays because it prevents misunderstandings from growing. I feel that in the U.P. a great deal of our misunderstandings are due to people functioning separately and suspecting each other's motives or ideas. You know that I am continually working with people with whom I do not agree, who suspect me and whom sometimes I suspect of entirely wrong political views. But I carry on because I talk to them frequently of these very differences and suspicions.

I cannot write to you much now but you must pull yourself together. I showed your letter to Narendra Deva and Pantji but I have had no time to talk to them about it. I just got a vague suggestion that there was some misunderstanding.

Now about Sherwani's election. I hope you have gone to Orai. I do not propose to discuss what has already happened and the errors that we might have made. I have had an extraordinary letter from Fida.[2] It is so foolish that I can only conclude that illness has interfered with his present sanity. He himself says that he is feeling rather mad.

You know that it was made clear to Sherwani that the U.P.P.C.C. was unable to help him financially for the simple reason that we did not have the funds. And this was accepted by Sherwani. However the fact remains that this election has become an important one and therefore we cannot shirk responsibility even though we have no commitments. So far as workers are concerned a fair number has gone from outside. Abul Kalam Azad has sent telegrams to Husain Ahmad and

2. Fida, a brother of N.A.K. Sherwani, in his letter of 30 June 1937 wrote: "... the last election has left us broke and the main reason why my brother was defeated even in the last election is that he was ruthlessly...and hopelessly neglected by the Congress. In fact, Congressmen were instrumental in getting my brother defeated...."

Bashir Ahmad[3] of the *Aljamiat* of Delhi. He was also telegraphing to Ahmad Said. These people must be paid their travelling expenses.

We shall anyhow try to give some financial help. I believe that already about Rs. 700 have been given to various persons for this election. I understand that Pantji gave you Rs. 250. I gave Rs. 100 to Muzaffar, Mohammed Miyan etc. and Rs. 100 to Keshav. I have further written to Diwan Shatrughna Singh for Rs. 250 which I shall send a little later. We shall try to send more money. How much I cannot say. But you know what importance we attach to this matter and we shall try our utmost. Meanwhile you must make the fullest arrangements for work during this last week and for polling day.

I am likely to return from here on the 7th evening reaching Allahabad on the 8th evening. I may be delayed by a day. I shall visit Bundelkhand according to the programme drawn up for me on the 11th and 12th.

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. (1885-1955); a leading member of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind; suffered imprisonment several times during the freedom struggle; member, U.P. Council, 1948-55.

24. To N.A. K. Sherwani[1]

Camp Wardha
July 5, 1937

My dear Nisar,

I have had a very extraordinary letter from Fida. He seems to have lost his balance owing to illness and other causes. But I do not wish to write about this matter now. I am at the present moment interested in how to help you in the election. I have already telegraphed to you that Abul Kalam Azad has wired to Maulana Husain Ahmad and Maulvi Bashir Ahmad of *Aljamiat*, Delhi, to visit your constituency immediately. He is also wiring to Ahmad Said of Delhi. He has asked them to communicate with you. You must make arrangements for their travelling expenses etc.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, pp. 101-103, N.M.M.L.

You have written both to me and to Abul Kalam about lack of funds. You know that the provincial committee has no funds at all and is very heavily in debt. This was made plain to you some time back. So it is impossible for us to look up to the provincial committee. Most of us were under the impression till two or three days ago that you desired no financial help. Narendra Deva and the others whom I have spoken to have told me that they know nothing about your financial difficulties. I believe some letter was sent by Fida to the P.C.C. office. Unfortunately Narendra Deva was not there and Rafi had been ill. The office must have answered formally because it could only answer that they have no money.

However, although no commitments or promises were made, still we cannot shirk the responsibility, specially in view of the importance that is now attached to your election. Therefore we want to do our utmost to help you in this matter even financially. I cannot say what we can do because we have no funds to draw upon and we cannot ask the provincial committee for the simple reason that it has nothing. So that the arrangements that we make will be personal arrangements for which we are ourselves responsible. It is a difficult job but we do not want your work to suffer for want of funds. Some money has already been given to the people who have gone from Allahabad. Rafi has taken some small sum too. I have written to Diwan Shatrughna Singh that I am responsible for Rs. 250/- which I shall send him later. In a day or so we shall try to make arrangements to send more money to you or to others there. What exactly this will be I cannot say just yet.

I expect to return to Allahabad by the 9th. Please drop me a line there to confirm your programme for me. I shall adhere to that programme unless I hear to the contrary from you.

I am writing this letter at a late hour at night after a very tiring and exhausting day. I have still much work to do for tomorrow. But I felt that I must write to you. I have no doubt that you can win this election if you try. Remember again that it is quiet organisation and silent workers going to the villages that count, not just a few flashy personalities coming for a day like myself.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

25. The Need for an Urdu Newspaper[1]

The proposal to have an Urdu periodical, to begin with a weekly and later a daily, to give to the Urdu-knowing public the ideological message of the Congress and to fight all sectarian tendencies, is one which must command support. I welcome it and commend it to others. Although I have plenty of other work to do, I shall gladly associate myself with this venture, because in common with my other colleagues, I realize the importance of it. I trust that Congressmen and all friends of the Congress will support this venture. In doing so they will be supporting the cause they have at heart.

1. 7 July 1937. *The Leader*, 10 July 1937. This message was given to the Hindustan Newspapers Co. Ltd., Lucknow, which planned to publish *Hindustan*, an Urdu weekly.

26. The Importance of Urdu Newspapers[1]

Allahabad
July 10, 1937

Dear Comrade,

Reports from the provinces tell us that our efforts to increase our contacts with the Muslim masses continue to meet an encouraging response. These efforts must be continued in towns and villages.

I have already pointed out to you that in order to reach our Muslim comrades it is desirable and necessary for us to issue our pamphlets, leaflets and notices in the Urdu script in addition to the Devanagri or other scripts. In northern and central India this should always be done as a matter of routine, both in towns and villages. In the south and elsewhere where the Urdu-knowing public is very limited, especially in

1. Circular to provincial Congress committees. A.I.C.C. File No. P-1/1937-38, p. 91, N.M.M.L.

rural areas, this duplication need not always take place. But even there it is desirable in the larger towns where there is always an Urdu-reading section of the population.

In this connection I would suggest to you to ask your district and local committees, as well as your Muslim mass contact committees, to subscribe to some Urdu newspapers which present the Congress viewpoint or support the Congress generally. Such newspapers should be encouraged and they are of value in spreading the Congress ideology among the people. If you have such newspapers in your province you will no doubt subscribe to them. In addition to these I would draw your attention to two Urdu weeklies of an all-India significance.

Within two weeks or so an Urdu weekly—*Hindustan*—will come out from Lucknow under the Congress auspices. I would strongly recommend this to you and I suggest that your district committees should communicate with the manager, *Hindustan*, 6 Neill Road, Lucknow.

The other paper to which I would draw your attention is the Urdu weekly, the *Aljamiat* of Delhi. This is not a Congress newspaper. It is issued on behalf of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema. It has however espoused the Congress cause to a large extent and its appeal is of special value to the Urdu-reading public. I commend to you therefore this weekly and trust that your local committees will subscribe to it. The address is: The Manager, *Aljamiat*, Delhi. The subscriptions of both these weeklies are trivial and every committee could easily afford them.

It would be desirable to build up small reading-rooms attached to town, ward and village Congress offices where these and other newspapers could be made available to the public. This would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

27. To Kailas Nath Katju[1]

Allahabad
10-7-1937

My dear Kailas Nath,
If it is possible for you I should like you to help in the defence of a Muslim colleague of ours who has got into trouble because of a speech

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-57/1937, p. 51, N.M.M.L.

he delivered in Allahabad at the time the informal Muslim conference was held here in May last. His name is Maulvi Abul Qasim[2] of Shahjahanpur. There is a set attempt being made on the part of the government to control and suppress Muslim workers on behalf of the Congress and it is up to us to give such persons as much help as we can. The case is likely to take place in Allahabad. Muhammad Mian (Muhammad al Farruqui) of Allahabad will probably see you about this matter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. A prominent leader of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind.

28. On the Suppression of Congress Workers[1]

The U.P. Provincial Congress Committee has already drawn attention to the organized campaign to suppress Congress workers, which has been initiated by the government in the U.P.

Large numbers of our workers, especially those who work among the peasantry, have either been convicted or are being proceeded against.

One special feature of this planned repression is the way the Muslim workers for the Congress are being penalised.

Mr. Sajjad Zaheer,[2] secretary of the Allahabad Congress Committee, is being proceeded against for a speech to a kisan gathering.

Maulana Abul Qasim of Shahjahanpur is also being proceeded against for a speech delivered in Allahabad on the occasion of his visit here in May last to attend the informal Muslim conference. Noted Muslims, who are connected with the Congress mass contact programme, are being singled out.

Maulana Husain Ahmad, a prominent divine of Deoband, was externed from Delhi when he was carrying on propaganda in favour of Muslims joining the Congress.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 10 July 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 11 July 1937.
2. (1905-1973); member of the Communist Party; sentenced to four years' imprisonment by the Pakistan Government for his alleged role in a conspiracy case; returned to India on release.

Maulana Nuruddin Behari[3] of the Jamiat has also been externed from Delhi, apparently for the same reason. These actions of the government indicate the measure of their fear of our mass contact programme and their desire to obstruct it. I trust this will lead to greater activity in furtherance of this programme.

3. Member, Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind from Delhi; suffered imprisonment several times during the freedom struggle.

29. To Mahatma Gandhi[1]

Allahabad
13.7.1937

My dear Bapu,

On my return from Wardha I had to go almost immediately to Bundelkhand for Sherwani's election. I have just returned and found your note awaiting me. I am glad that a public announcement was made about the Maulana being consulted regarding Muslim ministers. I am expecting him and Govind Ballabh this evening for consultation.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan accompanied me to Jhansi etc. and has returned with me. Probably he will go to Bihar in a day or two. I do not quite know his programme yet.

About the Hindi-Urdu matter I shall write something within a few days.[2] It will not be very deep. But it may help in clearing the issues and facilitating a calmer consideration of them. I shall send you a copy, also to Maulana. Just at present there is a rush of work here in the office owing to my long absence and Kripalani is not here.

Sherwani's election is an uncertain affair. One thing can be said, that the majority either way is likely to be small. The electorate is 7500. Probably 5000 will vote and I imagine that the majority will be less than 500, probably much less.[3] The major fact against us is a question of caste brotherhood. The Muslim League candidate is a Malkhan Rajput and 25 per cent of the total electorate consists of these Malkhan

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, pp. 107-108, N.M.M.L.
2. See *post*, section 15, item 33.
3. 4,557 votes were cast and Rafiuddin defeated Sherwani by 727 votes.

Rajputs. These people in a caste panchayat have decided to support the Muslim League candidate and they have even gone so far as to threaten with various pains and penalties those members of the brotherhood who vote against their candidate. These people are so frightened of this caste order that they dare not even come out of their houses to our meetings. They simply keep away. This is a solid block of votes and we have so far been unable to touch them.

Then, of course, there is the cry of "Islam in danger" and this is being exploited to the uttermost by Shaukat Ali and some others. As a matter of fact we have had all the better of the argument and we have produced quite a galaxy of Muslim leaders including men like Maulana Husain Ahmad and other Ulemas to support Sherwani. The general feeling among the better class Muslims is entirely in favour of Sherwani. The peasantry as a rule is also in his favour except for the Malkhan Rajputs. The whole electorate is very backward, politically speaking. Whatever the result of the election it has been a great success from our point of view in awakening the Muslim masses there, and large numbers of Muslims of the middle classes have volunteered for help to Sherwani. Students of Aligarh have come of their own accord to help him. Altogether the atmosphere created by this election not only in the constituency but in the U.P. generally is good. There is considerable resentment at the exploitation of religion and at the backwardness of the Muslim masses who can be misled in this way.

There are of course elements of trouble in the constituency in the sense that Shaukat Ali and others are always talking in terms of trouble. Shaukat Ali continually refers to a possible civil war.[4] He has said that he will make a Spain of India and so on and so forth. His language sometimes is astonishingly vulgar. All this may delude some people. But it has produced a strong reaction among the thinking Muslims against him. Many people who were half-hearted in their support of the Congress are now much stronger and more determined.

Yesterday at Orai I had a slightly unpleasant experience. As I was coming back in a car from Jalaun accompanied by Mahmud and two others, suddenly a group of little boys, hardly more than six or seven

4. For example, in a statement published on 9 July 1937 Shaukat Ali had said: "I am very sorry to see Pandit Nehru and his entourage on the warpath, issuing challenges to everybody. I do not know what others will do, but I am certain that the Indian Muslims will never accept the position, which he wants to assign them. Nor would they become anybody's camp-followers. If he persists in this policy, I am afraid he will create great mischief, hurt the cause of freedom and the progress of India and worsen our position, which will eventually end in civil war."

years of age, headed by two grown-ups with the Muslim League flag, tried to stop our car and then threw stones at it. A window pane was broken, but no one was hurt. Such incidents, small in themselves, create excitement. However, I treated it lightly and I believe the excitement passed. Some of our Muslim colleagues there were very angry and wanted to demand police action. But I stopped this.

Reports from the Punjab and Sind regarding work among the Muslim masses are very encouraging.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

30. On a Stone-throwing Incident[1]

Newspapers this morning state that I was injured at Orai by stone-throwing. This is entirely untrue. A few stones were thrown at our moving car as we were returning from Jalaun to Orai. I was not even touched by them and no one was injured.

The windscreen of the car was not broken, but one of the side glass panes was broken. The incident had little importance and I did not think it even necessary to refer to it.

When, however, I found that exaggerated remarks were spreading, I made a brief reference to the matter at an Orai meeting. The report of the remarks in this connection that has appeared in the press is absolutely wrong.

I am not used to melodramatic utterances. What I said was that this trivial incident has little significance and people should not worry about it. Really the unfortunate part of it was that little boys, mostly under six or seven years of age, should be induced by their grown-ups to indulge in such unseemly behaviour. I emphasised that no importance should be attached to the incident.

Elections are apt to lead to excitement and sometimes to words and deeds which we regret afterwards. Let us, therefore, keep quite cool under these circumstances and avoid this excitement.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 14 July 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 15 July 1937.

31. To Postmaster, Orai[1]

Allahabad
July 18, 1937

Dear Sir,
On the 5th July, 1937, I sent a letter from Wardha[2] (C.P.) addressed to Syt. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, c/o The Congress Committee, Orai, District Jalaun (U.P.). This letter was sent by express delivery. I find that it was not delivered to the addressee or to anyone on his behalf. I understand that someone else is in possession of this letter. This matter must be inquired into and I am therefore writing to you to make the necessary inquiries and inform me of the result of them. As the letter was sent by express delivery some receipt for it must be in your possession. I should like to know to whom the letter was delivered.

Kindly treat this matter as urgent.

Yours faithfully,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 73, N.M.M.L.
2. See *ante*, item 23.

32. To Rafi Ahmad Kidwai[1]

Allahabad
July 18, 1937

My dear Rafi,
I understand that Rafiuddin has somehow obtained possession of my letter that I sent to you to Orai and that he wants to exploit it to his own advantage. I am sending you a copy of this letter. There is nothing in it which is secret or confidential, although of course the letter was meant for you alone. If necessary I am prepared to publish the letter.

I am also writing to the postmaster of Orai. But the real person to write to him should be the addressee, that is you. Will you, therefore, please write to him also?

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 67, N.M.M.L.

I understand that Pantji has taken some action in this matter. So I am sending him a copy of my original letter to you also.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

33. To Rafiuddin Ahmed[1]

Allahabad
July 18, 1937

Dear Mr. Rafiuddin,
On July 5th I addressed a letter from Wardha to Rafi Ahmad Kidwai. It was addressed as follows: Syt. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, c/o The Congress Committee, Orai, District Jalaun (U.P.). The letter was sent by express delivery. This letter did not reach the addressee.

It has come to my knowledge that this letter managed to reach you and came into your possession. Further that you or someone on your behalf opened this letter, although it was manifestly addressed to someone else. I shall be glad to know if this is a fact and whether this letter is in your possession. It is not usual for letters to be opened by people to whom they are not addressed and it has surprised me to learn that this was done in regard to the letter mentioned above sent by me to Rafi Ahmad Kidwai. Why this particular letter, which was so clearly addressed, should have reached you I do not know. I shall be glad if you will enlighten me on the subject as the matter is deserving of an inquiry.

My letter to Rafi Ahmad Kidwai was a personal one but there was nothing in it which I desired to keep secret. But I am concerned about the fact that a personal letter should be opened by another person and an attempt should be made to exploit it. It is because of this public aspect that I am writing to you on this subject.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 69, N.M.M.L.

34. The Congress and the Muslim League[1]

Mr. M. A. Jinnah's methods of controversy get curiouser and curiouser. In his latest statement he has referred triumphantly to a statement issued by some members of the Nationalist Party in Bengal.[2] What is the issue between us? Mr. Jinnah stated that even the Congress refused to agree to the formula evolved by him and Rajendra Babu during their Delhi conversations two years ago. It is admitted that Babu Rajendra Prasad agreed to this formula. It is further clear that Rajendra Babu, the then President of the Congress, assured Mr. Jinnah that he could get the Congress as an organisation to accept it, and he did so after consulting several members of the Working Committee who were in Delhi at the time. Rajendra Babu deliberately took that responsibility on himself and if Mr. Jinnah knew anything of the Congress, he must have realised that Rajendra Babu could deliver the goods so far as the Congress was concerned. It is true that Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and some members of the Bengal Nationalist Party did not accept that formula. But it is equally true that their opposition would not have prevented the Congress from accepting it. Mr. Jinnah will remember that the Bengal Nationalist Party was opposing the Congress in many matters and indeed had run candidates in opposition to Congress candidates during the elections to the Central Assembly. Therefore for Mr. Jinnah to say that even the Congress rejected that formula is entirely incorrect and I am surprised that he does not appreciate this patent fact. The Congress would have certainly accepted it on the recommendation of its President and the Working Committee. But Mr. Jinnah wanted the Nationalist Party also to agree. This they would not do and Rajendra Babu had no authority to speak for them. Because of this Mr. Jinnah did not consider it worthwhile to proceed with the matter, although Rajendra Babu was perfectly prepared to place it before the Congress and get its formal assent. This is the sequence of events and if Mr. Jinnah will consider it carefully, he will no doubt realise that his

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 20 July 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 21 July 1937.
2. They had issued a statement criticising the Poona Pact.

statements on this issue have been far from correct and that he has been doing an injustice not only to those whom he has sought to criticise, but also to himself.

This is past history, but the present holds us, and I am still waiting to know what Mr. Jinnah's reactions are to the methods adopted on behalf of the Muslim League in the recent Bundelkhand election. He has denied the notice issued in his name. Does he also disagree with its contents? If not, may we presume that this is his and the Muslim League's political platform? My visit to Bundelkhand has enlightened me greatly as to how communal organisations run elections and the notices and other material that we have collected will no doubt be of value to the future historian.

35. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Allahabad
21-7-1937

My dear Rajendra Babu,

Thank you for your letter about Orissa affairs.[2] I have been wanting to write to you for the last four days about a curious situation that has arisen here but as the urgency seemed to pass, I delayed writing. I shall now put you briefly in possession of the facts.

During the general elections in the U.P. there was not much conflict between the Congress and the Muslim League. It was the desire of both parties to avoid a conflict as much as possible and to accommodate each other. In the early stages of the election campaign a number of Muslims who were more or less Congressmen were doubtful if they would stand on behalf of the Congress or the League. If they had been pressed to do so they would have probably stood on the Congress ticket. But as there was no such pressure they drifted gradually to the League side under the vague impression that it was much the same thing. The League election board in the U.P. was a curious affair. There were some fairly good and old Congressmen in it, there were hopeless reactionaries, and there were middling people who drifted hither and thither.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Rajendra Prasad had been in charge of the formation of the ministry in Orissa.

As we looked upon the election campaign it was a tussle with the Agriculturist Party which was a wholly government party of big zamindars. The League also was opposing them and so inevitably our opposition to the League weakened. We did not want to split the forces opposed to pure reaction.

I did not know much about all this and had practically nothing to do with it. As the election campaign developed and our strength became apparent, some Muslims came to us wanting to stand on our ticket. But they were not obviously desirable from the Congress point of view and we allowed matters to drift, although we began to regret not having run more Congress Muslim candidates.

There was no kind of arrangement between the U.P. Congress and the League, but a kind of convention developed. In one or two instances we opposed League candidates and came near to success.

During the election campaign the outstanding and most powerful worker on behalf of the League was Maulana Husain Ahmad who has always been very near to the Congress. During my tours where there was no Congress Muslim candidate, I usually supported the League candidate if he was not an obvious reactionary, as sometimes he was.

After the elections there was a tussle inside the League and the reactionary elements seemed to gain the upper hand. Relations between the U.P. Congress and the U.P. League became more strained. During the convention at Delhi this matter was discussed by us with the Jamiat leaders who had so far supported the League fully but who were now worried at the reactionary turn it was taking.

After the convention the U.P. League board became even more reactionary and its president, the Raja of Salempur,[3] joined the interim ministry. This created a crisis in the League which resulted in the resignation of many members from its parliamentary board. Among those who resigned was Maulana Husain Ahmad. Most of those who resigned were not M.L.As but one M.L.A., Hafiz Ibrahim,[4] also resigned and formally joined the Congress Party. There were at least four or five other M.L.As in the League group who were keen on joining the Congress Party but who for various reasons refrained at the time.

3. Raja Shaban Ali Khan; resigned from the National Agriculturist Party in U.P. in 1936 to participate actively in the election campaign of the Muslim League.
4. Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim (1889-1964); joined Swaraj Party and was member, U.P. Council, 1926, and U.P. Assembly, 1937-39; minister, U.P. Government, 1937-39, and again from 1946 to 1958; Minister for Irrigation and Power, Government of India, 1958-63; Governor of Punjab, 1964.

During the months that followed there was much controversy between the two groups of Muslims—those of the League and those who had resigned and their sympathisers, who were supporting the Congress. Bitterness grew, and the success of the Congress appeal to the Muslim masses irritated the Muslim Leaguers. So matters stood and the distance between the League and the Congress went on widening. This came to a head in the recent Bundelkhand election. This election, although we lost it, was an eye-opener to everybody. All manner of Muslims from *maulvies* and members of the Jamiat to young students trooped up, often uninvited, to help the Congress candidate. The reactionary methods of the League irritated them and they grew quite enthusiastic in their opposition to it. We lost the election for two reasons: (1) the cry of 'Islam in danger' and (2) bribery on an extensive scale. Many voters came to us and told us that they would vote for the Congress candidate if we paid them a little more than the other side was paying. There was a third reason also—the strength of caste feeling. Quite 25% of the voters were Malkhan Rajputs and the Muslim League candidate belonged to the same brotherhood. Their *biradari* decided to support him and threatened to punish any member who did not do so. People were made to take the oath on the Qoran. This solid block of votes went wholly against us almost without a single exception. But for it we had a comfortable majority. There was also shameless personation in regard to women voters, the same persons voting again and again.

In spite of all this the election was a most hopeful sign of a growing political consciousness among the Muslims. All our workers are sure that if the election was held again in the same area we would win. Last time we only put in about ten days' intensive effort. We got the real rural vote of the peasant but the residents of the *qasbas* were far more difficult. It was interesting to find that the Muslim peasant was not carried away by the cry of 'Islam in danger'. When asked why he was voting for the Congress he confessed frankly that he did so because he expected the Congress to reduce his rent.

Generally speaking therefore our position has been considerably strengthened by the election. We have discovered to our pleasant surprise that there is a strong band of Muslim workers all over the province who are determined to fight reaction and to support the Congress. Quite a number of the leading lights of the Jamiat have helped us enthusiastically. They were disgusted by the tactics of the League's supporters in Bundelkhand. We have collected a large number of leaflets and posters issued by the League and they are instructive reading.

It is true that we have still to face a solid mass of reaction and the cry of religion carried off many people. It is also true that bribery is

rampant during Muslim elections. The voters are very poor and are smaller in number. We cannot and will not compete in these corrupt practices. Still the outlook is hopeful.

I have, without intending to do so, discussed at some length the Bundelkhand election. Still it will help you to form a background.

Towards the end of June, a little before the Working Committee meeting, the U.P. Muslim League leaders, Khaliquzzaman and Nawab Ismail Khan,[5] made an approach towards the Congress. This had obviously some connection with the possibility of ministries. They pointed out that last March their parliamentary board had offered cooperation to the U.P. Congress Party on the basis of the 'Wardha programme' as laid down by the Working Committee, and were prepared to work under the discipline of the Congress Party. You will remember the Working Committee resolution on the Congress policy in the legislatures passed at the Wardha meeting prior to the convention. It was not clear whether the Muslim League board accepted the whole resolution or only the particular items of the legislative programme. If the former, then they accepted the Congress policy 100% including independence, fighting the Act, constituent assembly, etc., etc.

I knew nothing about all this, nor did Maulana till it was vaguely hinted at Wardha early this month by Pantji. But it was all very vague and I did not like the look of this angling for ministries.

When Maulana Abul Kalam went to Lucknow from Wardha he saw Khaliq who told him that he was practically prepared to give him a blank cheque *provided* two of their number were included in the ministry—himself and Nawab Ismail Khan, the president of the U.P. board. Maulana looked at all this with some suspicion but he felt attracted by the possibility of the whole Muslim League ceasing to exist as a separate group and being practically absorbed by the Congress.

He and Pant came to Allahabad and we discussed the matter at great length. I disliked (we all did) this bargaining for seats in the ministry. We disliked taking in two persons who, from the Congress point of view, were weak. We feared reaction among the Congressmen in general, and Congress Muslims in particular, who would have been irritated at their being excluded in preference for those who had been fighting the Congress. What of those who had severed their connection with the League

5. Nawab Muhammad Ismail Khan (1884-1958); took active part in the khilafat movement in U.P.; a prominent leader of the Muslim League, 1930-46; member, Working Committee of the All India Muslim League for a long time and president, U.P. Muslim League; member, League Action Committee, 1945-46; vice-chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University, 1947-48.

and joined us? What of those Muslims of ours who had stood by the Congress during all these years? What of the Jamiat which was supporting us and opposing the League? You must remember that we have always had a strong and staunch group of Muslims with us in the U.P. They have not been many but they are growing in influence and younger Muslims are now strongly attracted to us. Were we going to ignore those who were with us and favour our opponents who joined us just to get the spoils of office? And then there was the risk of conflicts arising within the ministry or the party—conflict of a communal or political nature—resulting in resignations and the creation of an awkward situation.

All this and more we considered and we hesitated. And yet the alternative was worth having if it could be secured. This was the winding up of the Muslim League group in the U.P. and its absorption in the Congress. This would have a great effect not only in the U.P. but all over India and even outside. This would mean a free field for our work without communal troubles. This would knock over the British Government which relied so much on these troubles.

After much discussion in which two other members of the U.P. (Kripalani and Narendra Deva) joined, we came to the conclusion that we should offer stringent conditions to the U.P. Muslim League group and if they accepted them in toto then we would agree to two ministers from their group. Besides them one minister would be Rafi Ahmad.

We drew up these conditions. The March resolution of the Working Committee on Congress policy in the legislatures was to be accepted from A to Z after full consideration, so that there might be no misapprehension. The Muslim League group will be wound up, including the U.P. parliamentary board. All the Muslim League M.L.As to become full members of the Congress Party (but there was this that they were not specially asked to take the Congress pledge). All of them to abide by the discipline of the party. In bye-elections, no separate candidates; all to support the Congress candidates, and generally to endeavour to increase the prestige of the Congress. If the Congress decided on resignation from the ministry or from the legislature, they would follow suit. And some others. You will agree that these were pretty stringent conditions and in effect amounted to something more than the Congress pledge. But we did not ask them to sever all connection with the parent Muslim League. The position would have been a peculiar one involving a dual loyalty to some extent. It could not last and we expected the U.P. Leaguers to break away from the parent League.

We decided to offer these conditions and also that if any condition was not agreed to, then not to come to terms with them.

Maulana and Pant went to Lucknow. They sent for Nawab Ismail Khan but he was ill in Meerut and could not come. There were talks with Khaliq who agreed to all the conditions except two: the winding up of the parliamentary board and not to set up separate candidates at bye-elections. These were vital conditions. Khaliq said that he personally would agree but he had no authority to do so. In effect, he pointed out, this might happen anyhow. Therefore Maulana said he could not give a final answer and came to Allahabad.

Meanwhile rumours had spread that we were talking with the Muslim League. Of course the details were not known. There was consternation among all our people, especially the Muslim Congressmen, the Jamiat people and young Muslims. Not only consternation but anger for the Bundelkhand election was fresh in everybody's mind. Maulana Husain Ahmad sent a special messenger and so on and so forth.

I was feeling very uncomfortable and was instinctively repelled by all this talk on an opportunistic basis. I felt trouble would follow and the settlement would be temporary only. Maulana was also distracted. Ultimately we sent word that we regretted we could not alter our previous conditions at all; if they were accepted in toto we would agree, not otherwise. We had no authority to go beyond this without consulting the Working Committee. So the matter dropped and Maulana Azad went off to Bombay. Khaliq said he was unable to agree.

Today Khaliq made another approach. He suggested that he would call an emergent meeting of his executive to consider the question of the bye-elections if we could postpone decision for some days. I spoke to him on the phone. I referred him to Pantji but did not encourage him at all.

That is how matters stand now. Maulana Azad is keen on Hafiz Ibrahim being taken into the cabinet. He is a good and competent man and used to belong to the Swaraj Party. He might be described as a moderate Congressman. Pantji knows him well. There is just one difficulty about him and that is this. It might be said that he left the League and joined us in order to get into the ministry. This would not be true as he left the League in March or early April when the question of ministry was not in the air. He left with a group including Maulana Husain Ahmad. He is intimately connected with the Jamiat. Still it is possible that the torrent may be hurled against him.

I am tired of writing this long letter. By the time you reach the end of it you will appreciate the humour of my saying at the beginning that I would give you a brief account. But the matter was complicated and

I wanted you to be in full possession of the facts in case of possible developments. Vallabhbhai has already had a chance of discussing this with Maulana Azad.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Bapu.

Maulana Azad has not returned yet from Bombay, nor is there any news of him.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

36. On the Result of the Bundelkhand Bye-election[1]

The Muslim League is entitled to rejoice at the result of the election in Bundelkhand. And yet people in Bundelkhand itself and others who know the facts realise that this election has considerably enhanced the prestige and strength of the Congress. It is interesting, therefore, to examine the facts.

This was the first occasion during the past many years of elections of various kinds that the Congress had contested an election for a Muslim seat in this area. Politically it was a virgin field; practically no political or economic issues had been touched. It was a separate communal electorate liable to be influenced by communal cries. For the first time, the Congress came into the field and talked the language of politics and economics. On the other side, stress was laid throughout on communalism and the cry of 'religion in danger' was a powerful slogan for a non-political electorate.

Out of a total vote cast amounting to about 4,700 the Congress candidate got nearly 2,000, a substantial number. The constituency included three districts: Orai, Jhansi and Hamirpur. In two of these districts, Orai and Jhansi, Mr. Sherwani, the Congress candidate, got a clear majority; in the third district, Hamirpur, the Muslim League candidate had an overwhelming majority. Mr. Rafiuddin, the League candidate, was a resident of Hamirpur district and had all the advantages

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 25 July 1937. *The Hindu*, 29 July 1937.

of a local resident. He was in addition a Muslim Rajput and over 25 per cent of the voters were Muslim Rajputs, and their brotherhood resolved as a body to support their own member. Not only this, but pledges were given on the Holy Qoran to this effect and any member not so voting was threatened with pains and penalties. Many of these Muslim Rajputs told us that they would have gladly voted for the Congress candidate but for fear of the *biradari* and the oath they had taken. And so Mr. Rafiuddin got the solid vote of the Muslim Rajputs and this swamped all other votes. In one polling station alone he got 900 such votes. But for this, he was sure to have lost.

This was the chief reason for the Muslim League victory. Apart from this, the League relied chiefly on the cry of 'religion in danger'. To my knowledge, they discussed no political or economic issues; they tried to rouse communal and religious passions and in a politically backward area this was bound to produce effect. It is surprising and gratifying that, in spite of all this, the Congress candidate did remarkably well. It should be remembered that effective Congress propaganda began only ten days before the election and yet it produced this marked effect. Our propaganda was purely political and economic and we saw how even in a backward area we could make substantial progress in spite of communal and religious cries. This is full of hope for the Congress and for the growth of political consciousness.

It was interesting to find how the purely rural votes, those of the peasants, were almost entirely cast for the Congress. The Muslim League got the votes from *qasbas*, the small towns. This meant that the Muslim League votes were concentrated and easily accessible while the Congress votes were scattered far and wide. This made a considerable difference during the rainy season when roads and paths were often impassable.

I do not wish to say anything here about several very undesirable features of the election. I cannot hold the League responsible for them but the fact remains that undesirable practices were indulged in. A relatively small electorate of very poor persons is an invitation for such practices.

And yet in spite of these enormous handicaps the Congress candidate, who was a stranger to the constituency, managed to do remarkably well. A gratifying feature of the election was the vast amount of support received by the Congress candidate from all kinds of Muslims from all over the province.

The Bundelkhand election is one of the most encouraging signs of the times. It points to the inevitable growth of the Congress among the masses, both Hindu and Muslim.

37. To Rafiuddin Ahmed[1]

Allahabad
August 4, 1937

Dear Mr. Rafiuddin,
I am in receipt of your letter of the 24th.[2] I am glad to know that no letter of mine addressed to someone else reached you or was opened by you. But it has been stated publicly in the press that my letter to Rafi Ahmad Kidwai did reach either you or your supporters. And indeed it was stated that it was going to be published soon. I do not very much care whether it is published or not. But it is for you to consider who, among your supporters, is responsible for this gross breach of the conventions of decent life. As soon as I heard of this I wrote to you on the subject and I would again invite you to make inquiries in the matter and to find out who the guilty party is.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 37, N.M.M.L.
2. Ahmed denied having received any letter "misdirected" to him and was unwilling to make enquiries at the Muslim League office at Orai as it was occupied by a "large number" of persons.

38. On Communalism[1]

It is the inalienable right of the Congress to approach Muslim masses. Large numbers of Muslims have always been with the Congress in its fight for national freedom.

I appeal to you to ponder over the political and economic realities and to realize that communalism is an old weapon of the imperialists.

The last meeting that I addressed in this locality was over a year ago. Since then Bombay has passed through a period of communal rioting

1. Speech at Madanpura, Bombay, 11 August 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 12 August 1937.

which pained me greatly. Such occurrences make me feel that the great problem we have to tackle is our own ignorance and folly which cause grave disorders.

Imperialism has sown the seeds of communalism everywhere for it thrives on disunity among the subject people. The imperialists are not interested in any religion. Their motive is economic exploitation. Thus the real rulers of India are the British capitalists and financiers who run the empire for their own benefit.

I want you to understand these economic realities. The problem of poverty cannot be solved except by socialism. And in this connection it is amusing to find imperialists posing as sympathizers of Islam and Hinduism and telling the people that socialism is opposed to their religion. The real fact is that they do not want us to think in political and economic terms for once we grasped these realities we shall no longer submit to imperialist domination.

The Congress wants to make the people, the workers and peasants, politically conscious for they are the ultimate rulers of the country. The government under Swaraj would be based on small democratic units, so that every citizen would have a right and opportunity to influence decisions on every vital issue.

On the same basis we want to organize the Congress which is by far the strongest and most disciplined political body in the country. It is the only body which has been fighting for the independence of the country and at whose bidding thousands of men and women are prepared to undergo any hardships and to make every kind of sacrifice. Even if some people are opposed to the Congress viewpoint in certain matters they should join it in large numbers to try, in a democratic way, to convert it to their own way of thinking.

The Congress is not a religious organisation. Its main work lies exclusively in political and economic fields. As regards religion it has only one principle: that everyone should have complete freedom in the choice and practice of his religion. It also allows freedom to every community to develop its own culture. But a new question has been raised by the interested people who dispute the right of the Congress to approach the Muslims. I can understand if they opposed the Congress programme but to say that the Congress should not seek Muslim support is wrong on principle as well as opposed to historical facts. As a political organisation it would continue to propagate its ideals among members of all communities. I approach you, not as a Muslim or a Hindu. My relation with you is that of a fellow Indian and as such I approach you, to explain to you my ideas and try to convince you. I cannot understand how anyone could dispute that right.

A large number of Muslims have always been with the Congress and the Muslim province of the N.W. Frontier has made greater contribution to the cause of freedom than any other province and I hope many more would now join.

I do not wish to appeal to your sentiments by high-sounding phrases and slogans. I want you not to follow anyone blindly—the government or the Congress—but to learn to think for yourselves.

39. To A.M. Balu[1]

Allahabad
August 25, 1937

Dear Sir,[2]

I have your letter of the 19th August drawing my attention to a press cutting from *Viduthalai*, a Tamil daily. I cannot read this in original but I have read your translation.

It is true that I wrote a letter to Mr. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai regarding the Jhansi election and that this letter was apparently intercepted by someone on behalf of the Muslim League. I have no objection at all to the letter being published although it was a private letter dealing with personal matters apart from election matters. The inferences drawn from the letter in the Tamil paper are absurd and false. The election was run, as is usual for Congress elections, by the parliamentary board of the province of which Mr. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai was the president. As such the U.P. Congress Committee undertook to help financially in the conduct of the election to the best of its ability. We have done this in the case of a large number of Congress candidates during the general elections. In the Jhansi election some payments were made to our workers for travelling expenses, conveyance charges, etc. The constituency was a rural one spread out in three districts and as such our workers had to travel a lot. In my letter to Mr. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai I mentioned the payments that had been made for entry into our accounts and later on entered into the election accounts to be submitted to the

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, pp. 23-25, N.M.M.L.
2. Editor, *Salem Times;* in his letter of 19 August 1937, he had referred to the report published in the Tamil local newspaper alleging that the Congress President had bribed the *maulvies* to bring them into the Congress during the Jhansi election campaign.

authorities. So far as I remember the total sum that was mentioned in my letter was Rs. 700/-. Of this, Rs. 250/- were paid to Mr. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai himself for the parliamentary board; Rs. 250/- were paid to Diwan Shatrughna Singh, a prominent Congress worker of Hamirpur district. He was in charge of organising the workers in his district. Rs. 100/- were paid to Pandit Keshav Deva Malaviya who was sent on behalf of the provincial Congress committee to help in organisational work. And Rs. 100/- were paid to some Muslim workers sent from Allahabad. All these sums were not personal payments to individuals but advances made in connection with the election for which they had to account. All these sums will be mentioned in the election accounts to be submitted to the authorities. There was nothing secret about these and, as a matter of fact, having regard to the magnitude of the election, very small sums were spent by the U.P.P.C.C. It is totally false for anyone to say that any part of these sums was meant to bribe anyone. They were meant for the usual legitimate election expenditure, printing leaflets and paying for conveyance charges of the workers.

Further I stated in my letter to Mr. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai that some leading *maulvies* had been invited to come and help the Congress candidate and that they should be paid their travelling expenses.

You are at liberty to publish this letter if you so wish. This whole incident illustrates the low tactics employed by some opponents of the Congress.

Yours truly,
Jawaharlal Nehru

40. To M.A. Jinnah[1]

Allahabad
7-9-1937

My dear Jinnah,
I met Iftikharuddin[2] yesterday and he told me that you had mentioned to him some letter of mine which, according to you, contained compromising statements. I was surprised to hear this from Iftikharuddin and

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, pp. 19-20, N.M.M.L.
2. Mian Iftikharuddin (1907-1962); joined the Congress in 1935; detained during the Quit India movement; joined the Muslim League, 1946; became Minister for Rehabilitation in Pakistan, 1947; expelled from the party in 1950; founded Azad Pakistan Party, 1951, and founder-member, National Awami Party.

learn what you said in this connection. I understand that you have not actually seen the letter to which reference has apparently been made. I am therefore sending you a copy of it.[3]

This letter was of course a private one and deals in the first part with entirely private matters which are hardly political. In the second part of it it deals with Sherwani's election and mentions certain payments made on behalf of the provincial Congress committee to some workers of the Congress who were sent to Bundelkhand to help Sherwani. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai was the president of our parliamentary board and Keshav Deva Malaviya was the secretary. I gave an account of some of these payments so that the parliamentary board should enter them in their books and they should further be entered in the election accounts later. These payments were made to our principal organisers for travelling and other expenses for the workers employed.

I presume you know that we try to help our candidates in so far as we can and we have done so in the general elections as well as in the bye-elections. I am astonished that this letter of mine should first of all be stolen and then a completely false and malicious use should be made of it by certain individuals. I do not mind the letter being published in full, although as I have stated it was a private letter. What is done however is for people to carry on a whispering propaganda and to make all manner of vague allegations and insinuations. There is absolutely nothing in this letter or in our conduct of the Bundelkhand election which was improper and which I seek to hide. I think that we maintained throughout that election a very high standard of public conduct.

But as this matter has apparently come to your notice I think it desirable to send you a full copy of the letter in question. I should like you to find out, if you can, who is responsible for stealing this letter. I wrote on the subject to Mr. Rafiuddin of Jhansi, but his replies have been curious and he is not prepared to take any action in the matter.

I am leaving Allahabad today on my way to Bombay and expect to be away for two weeks.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. See *ante*, item 23.

41. No Compromise with the Muslim League[1]

The Congress is a force which no one can resist.

The Congress is a political body whose doors are open to all. It has routed the Hindu Sabha. The Muslim League's existence is seen only in a few provinces and is confined to only a few Muslims belonging to the upper classes. Its policy and programme differ from those of the Congress. How can there be unity between the two bodies unless the Congress gives up its ideals? The Hindu-Muslim question is a question of the upper classes and not of the masses. Both Hindu and Muslim masses are steeped in poverty which can be removed from both simultaneously and not separately.

The Congress has nothing to do with religion. It is a political body fighting for the country's freedom in which the Muslims should take their due share. The Indian National Congress works for the betterment of the masses. There is nothing like the Hindu-Muslim question but it is the question of doing away with the country's bondage.

I therefore appeal to the Muslims to join the Congress in large numbers.

1. Speech at a Muslims' meeting, Ahmedabad, 17 September 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 19 September 1937.

42. To Siddiq Ahmad Siddiqui[1]

Allahabad
28.9.1937

My dear Siddiqui,[2]

I fully agree with your suggestion. I think we must form a united front against the present Aligarh regime in alliance with everybody who

1. A.I.C.C. File No. 13/1937, p. 39, N.M.M.L. The date 8 September 1937 given in the office copy of the letter is obviously incorrect as Jawaharlal refers to the Palestine conference which was held on 25 September 1937.
2. A nationalist Muslim student of Aligarh Muslim University and founder-member, All India Students Federation, 1936.

agrees with us—Muslim League, Independents, Liberals, etc. I think there are at least a dozen old boys in the U.P. legislature. You must approach all of them and if possible get a joint statement apart from short notice questions. As for our attitude to the annual session of the All India Muslim League, it is clear that we welcome every attempt at its democratisation and that of providing a mass basis. The real contradiction of the Muslim League lies in the fact that a few feudal landlords and reactionaries want to exploit the backward Muslim masses for the retention of their privileges and a fundamentally reactionary political outlook. Now an effort to widen the basis of the Muslim League will immediately bring them into conflict with the Muslim mass demands. They will try to hoodwink the masses by emphasising superficial issues (*vide* the tentative agenda of the League). We should help the Muslims to organise big mass meetings and to formulate their mass demands. For instance we must demand that the talukdari system must be abolished in the interests of the Muslim kisans, that indebtedness should be immediately liquidated, that immediate provision should be made for the relief of the unemployed, that all *waqf* property should be returned to democratically elected bodies, and finally we must insist that the membership of the Muslim League should be confined only to exploited Muslim masses. This means that every Muslim who lives a parasitic life should be excluded from the organisation of the Muslim League. The purpose of this League should be to start an active and organised struggle against British imperialism. On the Palestine question we must insist that the Muslim League adopt the resolution of treble boycott passed by the Palestine conference and that the proposal of sending a deputation should be exposed.[3] You can take it on my authority that this proposal was first placed before the Muslims at the suggestion of the Viceroy after Maulana Shaukat Ali had met him. I have seen Maulana Shaukat Ali's own letter to Mohammad Mian of Allahabad narrating all that. In short, I suggest that instead of forming an independent Muslim league or accepting the League membership and working from within, we must organise in every *mohalla* mass meetings of Muslims and formulate their mass demands. Then we should lead a big demonstration and present these demands

3. On 25 September 1937 the Palestine conference held in Calcutta passed a resolution calling upon the League of Nations to protect the rights of small nations, to terminate the mandate of Palestine, and to allow its people to work out their future. It also resolved to send a deputation to Muslim countries and Europe to represent the Indian viewpoint as regards Palestine and to try to secure the annulment of the partition of Palestine.

before Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim Leaguers. I will come to Lucknow on the 12th and stay with Dr. Zaheer.[4]

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. Syed Ali Zaheer (b. 1899); member, U.P. Council, 1930-37; resigned from the Muslim League and joined the Congress in 1937; member, Interim Government, 1946; ambassador to Iran, 1947; ambassador to Iraq, 1948-51; minister, U.P. Government, 1951-67; member, U.P. Legislature, 1969-74.

43. To Dewan Chaman Lal[1]

Allahabad
30/9/37

My dear Chaman Lal,
I have just received your letter[2] of the 28th enclosing a copy of the letter which you and Raizada Hansraj[3] have sent to Mahatmaji. I have read the letter with some surprise. It seems to ignore completely the events and tendencies of the last year or two. We are always prepared to discuss with anyone the communal or any other important question and to try to find a solution. But these questions cannot be isolated from the basic political and economic issues. There is little use in discussing them with someone who does not agree with the Congress on these basic issues. Then again the old method of one or two individuals coming to terms has been shown to be pretty useless. We are dealing today with democratic forces and cannot side-track. The Congress may or may not represent any considerable body of Muslims but the Muslim League certainly does not represent any but the reactionary elements in the Muslims. Jinnah's attitude during the past year has been to encourage extreme communalism and reaction among the Muslims and

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-17/1937, pp. 319-321, N.M.M.L.
2. He had written that Jinnah "is in a mood not only to discuss but to come to an agreement regarding the communal issue as well as other issues of graver import."
3. (1869-1958); a leading Congressman of the Punjab; imprisoned several times during the freedom struggle; member, central legislature, for many years from 1928; member, Lok Sabha, 1952-56.

there is great resentment against this among progressive Muslims. Large numbers of them have come to the Congress as a consequence of this and we have to consult these comrades of ours in any matter which affects them and the Muslims generally. Still we are perfectly prepared to meet Jinnah if the position is cleared up. Rajendra Babu's offer is already there.

What are the communal issues before us today and what are we going to talk about and with whom? On political and economic matters to treat the Muslims or the Hindus as homogeneous groups is absurd, and yet this is what Jinnah thinks should be done. I am afraid I am wholly unable to think on these lines.

As you know Rajendra Babu has publicly stated that he is prepared to stand by the agreement with Jinnah which was arrived at two years ago. Jinnah's answer to this frank approach has been extraordinarily futile. All of us in the Congress will stand by Rajendra Babu's assurance. No argument or further discussions are necessary on that point. It is for Jinnah and his group to be equally frank.

I am afraid I do not appreciate the steps you have taken in this matter. They are not likely to help.

As for the Punjab unity conference,[4] if it fails, as it is likely to, the responsibility is not ours. Personally I am more concerned with the repressive policy of the Punjab Government[5] and it may be that because of this alone, apart from other factors, it may be desirable for Congressmen to dissociate themselves from the unity conference. The Punjab Government is today by far the most reactionary and offensive of all provincial governments and it is time that it was shown up.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. The conference was convened by Sikandar Hayat Khan to devise ways and means to end communalism.
5. A Unionist ministry headed by Sikandar Hayat Khan was in office in the Punjab.

44. To Mahatma Gandhi[1]

Allahabad
September 30, 1937

My dear Bapu,
Chaman Lal has sent me a copy of a letter dated 25th September which he and Hansraj have sent to you. This letter has only just reached me and I am sending him a reply immediately. I enclose a copy of this reply. I think that Hansraj and Chaman Lal have acted very unwisely in this matter. I do not know what answer you have sent to them but I am sure that a meeting between you and Jinnah at this stage would not only serve little purpose but might be actually harmful. I am writing to Maulana also about this.

Yours affectionately,
Jawahar

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-17/1937, p. 317, N.M.M.L.

45. To the President, The Grand Muslim Union, Bombay[1]

Allahabad
5-10-1937

Dear Sir,
Your letter.[2] Your surprise surprised me. There is nothing in my letter to Mr. Rafi Ahmad which is contrary to what I wrote to you. We do not support any organisations—Muslim, Hindu, or other. But when we contest elections we put up candidates and we support our official candidates. In this way we have supported during the general elections about 150 candidates in the U.P. alone. Mr. Sherwani was our official candidate and the U.P. Provincial Election Board of the Congress helped him to the best of its ability. This was done entirely by the provincial Congress committee and the moneys given were to the officers and

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-61/1937, p. 9, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter of 4 October 1937, he wrote: "In one of your last letters you stated that you didn't support financially any Muslim organization which may hold Congress views. I am amazed to find the contrary in the cutting. Can you contradict it?..."

special workers of the provincial board for their expenses during the election. Mr. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai was the president of the provincial board, Mr. Keshav Deva was the secretary and the others are our special provincial workers of the Congress. I am writing these facts to you to enlighten you. But I might mention that this is no part of the work of the A.I.C.C. which does not concern itself with elections directly. The provinces are supposed to look after them.

Yours faithfully,
Jawaharlal Nehru

46. The Importance of Urdu Journalism[1]

Allahabad
7-10-1937

Dear Comrade,

I enclose a statement to which I should like you to give publicity in Gujarat.

I was interested during my visit to Gujarat, especially in Surat district, to come across large population of Muslims. I think it is desirable for your local committees to subscribe to some Urdu papers which give the Congress viewpoint or something approaching it. Such newspapers are far more important than occasional meetings and speeches. I suggest to you therefore that you might impress upon all your local committees to subscribe to one or two or three Urdu papers which they can place in their office or public libraries. This will be appreciated by our Muslim friends. I would particularly suggest that the weekly Urdu newspaper *Hindustan* (Neill Road, Lucknow) should be subscribed. Another paper which is not a Congress paper but which generally supports the Congress is the *Aljamiat* of Delhi which is also worthy of being subscribed.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Letter to the secretary, Gujarat P.C.C. A.I.C.C. File No. P-10/1937, p. 31, N.M.M.L.

47. To Dewan Chaman Lal[1]

Allahabad
7.10.1937

My dear Chaman Lal,

Thank you for your letter of the 3rd October. As I wrote to you we are always prepared to meet and discuss any matter with Jinnah or anyone else. As a matter of fact there is nothing very much to discuss. However, even so we are prepared to meet. But Jinnah has a curious way of proceeding about these matters in which the personal aspect predominates. I have watched with amazement his methods and public utterances during the last year or so. It almost seems that he has lost all idea of perspective and balance. To him Indian politics are just a background for individuals, notably himself. I do not think he has any conception of principles or the big issues at stake. It was because of all this that I hesitated when I got your letter, because any false step on our part would be exploited against us.

You refer to the regime of terror, reaction and corruption which is flourishing in the Punjab today. I agree with you. Why then do you give a certificate to Sikandar Hayat?[2] In your statement[3] congratulating Sikandar Hayat on his apology there was nothing at all wrong and yet did it not miss out the essential background of this situation, namely, the repression for which Sikandar Hayat is responsible? To read your statement meant to feel that Sikandar Hayat was acting in a magnanimous way and Satyapal was churlishly keeping away. Not to mention the repression etc. was almost to condone it under the circumstances. However, I hope to talk over Punjab matters at the conference in a few days.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-17/1937, pp. 241-242, N.M.M.L.
2. Sikandar Hayat Khan (1892-1942); leader of the Unionist Party in the Punjab; Chief Minister, Punjab, 1937-42.
3. In a statement issued on 30 September 1937, Dewan Chaman Lal said: "... as far as Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan is concerned...no attempt has been spared by him in the unity committee to bring about a generally workable and agreed solution."

48. The Tactics of the Muslim League[1]

I have nothing much to say regarding the recent happenings in the Muslim League;[2] but, of course, I have found them interesting reading. As it happened, I was busy these days addressing scores of meetings in the Frontier Province, and the contrast between the quiet dignity and strength of these brave comrades of ours in the Frontier, and the hysteria of the Muslim League is marked.

The League seems to have overlooked the Frontier Province, which census tells us is almost entirely Muslim and which present-day facts as well as past events tell us is solidly behind the Congress. I think recent developments in the League and allied circles are interesting and significant. They signify the obvious fear of the growing strength of the masses under Congress leadership. Vested communal interests, representing small sections of both Hindus and Muslims, want to align themselves to resist that mass pressure.

It is interesting to note that Bhai Parmanand has fully appreciated the Muslim League policy.[3] The next step should obviously be for the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, in the sacred name of religion, to join together to protect their respective vested interests against the incursion of the common people of India. This is a fascist development in India.

Behind the veil of religion and culture, there is this attempt to consolidate vested interests and groups of privileged people. Indian politics are thus becoming clearly defined and real issues are coming before the public. Unfortunately even now, to some extent, the cloak of religion misleads many people.

When the privileged groups begin to fear the growth of nationalism and mass interests, they begin to act hysterically and in an unbecoming

1. Interview to the press, Lahore, 17 October 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 19 October 1937.
2. At the Lucknow session on 17 October 1937 the Muslim League passed a resolution condemning the Congress for "foisting *Bande Mataram* as the national anthem upon the country in callous disregard of the feelings of Muslims." The League also protested against the formation of the ministries in certain provinces by the Congress and condemned the Governors for their failure to enforce their special powers for safeguarding the interests of the Muslims and other minorities.
3. In an interview to the press, he expressed approval of Jinnah's idea of organising the Muslims and desired that Hindus should also organise themselves for the protection of their rights.

manner. Perhaps, this is inevitable and we see that the limit has been passed. Wild talk of this kind does not influence events of course. But there are certain decencies which even a hysterical state cannot excuse. The League and its supporters stand clearly and definitely today for the division of India, even on a political and economic plane, into religious groups.[4] Whatever this may be, it is against the thesis of the nationalist idea of unity of India. It is a reduction of modern life and its problems to absurdity. It is mediaevalism. It is a thing which cannot happen because it is opposed to the logic of history. It is sad that there should be some people in India still who are so backward in their ideas as to think in this way. But, perhaps, it may be all to the good, for the issues are clearly defined by being put forward in this manner.

This is the last ditch of political reaction. It may cause us some inconvenience, but millions in this country will jump over it, as they have jumped over many other obstructions, and march steadily to their cherished goal of an independent and united India.

4. In his presidential address at the Lucknow session of the Muslim League on 15 October 1937, Jinnah said that the Congress ministries, "by their words, deeds and programme had shown that the Mussalmans cannot expect any justice or fairplay at their hands...they have their destiny in their hands, and a well-knit, solid, organised united force can face any danger and withstand any opposition. No Hindu leader speaking with any authority shows any concern or genuine desire for it. Honourable settlements can only be achieved between equals, and unless the two parties learn to respect and fear each other, there is no solid ground for any settlement. Offers of peace by the weaker party always mean confession of weakness, and an invitation to aggressiveness....It does not require political wisdom to realise that all safeguards and settlements would be a scrap of paper, unless they are backed up by power. Politics means power and not relying on cries of justice or fairplay or goodwill."

49. To Subhas Chandra Bose[1]

Allahabad
20.10.1937

My dear Subhas,

Your letter of the 17th. Certainly as suggested by you I shall discuss the *Bande Mataram* song with Dr. Tagore. I do not know that any formal statement is necessary by the Working Committee but we should

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-5/1937, p. 215, N.M.M.L.

be clear in our own minds. I have managed to get an English translation of *Ananda Math* and I am reading it at present to get the background of the song. It does seem that this background is likely to irritate the Muslims.[2] Further there is the difficulty of the language which is not understood by most people. I do not understand it without the help of a dictionary.

There is no doubt that the present outcry against *Bande Mataram* is to a large extent a manufactured one by the communalists. At the same time there does seem some substance in it and people who are communalistically inclined have been affected by it. Whatever we do cannot be to pander to communalists' feelings but to meet real grievances where they exist.

I have decided now to reach Calcutta on the 25th morning. This will give me time to see Dr. Tagore as well as other friends.

As for disciplinary action, it is difficult for me to talk vaguely about strictness or leniency. Ultimately this has to be considered in relation to the general situation and to the particular facts of the case. Generally speaking our policy was a strict one during the elections and immediately after. But later a certain leniency came in and a number of previous orders were revised on the party concerned apologising. In particular we felt that the denial of the four-anna membership to any person was not to be indulged in except in very special cases. Generally the punishment was in regard to the holding of offices or membership of an elected committee. If the past record of a person was good and he had erred merely at election time because of local factions and passions we tried to take a lenient view and on his apologising no further action was taken. But as I have said above each individual case has to be considered on its merits and even more important consideration is the result of such action on Congress work in future. If such action is good to help Congress work it must be taken. If it is likely to hinder then it is to be avoided. Many of our people are insufficiently developed in the political sense not to be affected by personal rivalries. And so they err occasionally without really wishing to go against the Congress. If it is possible to win them over and yet keep the prestige and discipline of the Congress, then it is worthwhile doing so. If a disciplinary action creates fairly widespread resentment among certain groups of Congressmen, then it has failed in its purpose.

These are various considerations that are to be borne in mind. But ultimately the matter should be decided by the provincial committee or

2. See *post*, section 5, item 22.

its sub-committee. I dislike very much the idea of the Working Committee or the A.I.C.C. interfering in provincial decisions except in a friendly way by private advice or consultation. In rare cases interference may be called for. After all it is the P.C.C. which has to shoulder the burden of the work in the province and it is not fair to it to do anything which lessens its prestige. That is why our office has not taken any action in such matters directly and we have consistently tried to uphold the position of the P.C.C. At the same time we have tried to soothe the feelings of the parties concerned. Generally we have sent copies of our letters to the P.C.C. I was astonished to learn from Sarat that the secretary of the P.C.C. does not keep him in touch with our correspondence. This in itself shows a certain lack of cooperation in your office.

Apart from the general difficulty of dealing with party factions and the like, an additional difficulty is met with in Bengal and that is the communal one which is likely to get tied up with party rivalries. Bengal, politically considered, has been almost entirely a Hindu province in the past, that is to say, Hindu Bengal has taken an active part in politics. This is not likely to remain so for long as more and more Muslims are becoming politically awake. The question therefore is how far the Congress can influence these Muslims and bring them within its fold. If we are unable to do so they will strengthen the communal elements. And then we shall have a dominating communal element in the politics of Bengal. Thus the situation is a different one and in everything that is done, in our general Congress work, in assembly work, in the disciplinary action that we take, all these wider considerations have to be borne in mind. I have no doubt that you and Sarat have these considerations in mind. The recent meeting of the Muslim League and the fulminations of Fazlul Huq there have shown the recrudescence of an intensive and low type of communalism.[3] You may have to suffer for this in Bengal more than people in other provinces. But I do hope that you will be able to counter it by a wide appeal to the Muslim masses. There is no other way to meet it. I do not think that there is any real strength behind the Muslim League or its newfangled supporters. But it is our weakness that will make a difference. In facing this

3. In a speech on 17 October 1937 at Lucknow, Fazlul Huq said: "If the Hindu Congress ministries continue to follow a policy of oppression of the Muslim minorities in their provinces, I declare it from this platform that I shall retaliate in Bengal even if it costs my life...hypocrisy, untruth and deceit are the basis of Congress policies and the Congress is trying to establish a Hindu raj in India."

difficult situation it is wise to avoid as far as possible internal factions within the Congress and to try to end them.

About Tipperah district I can say nothing because obviously I do not know all the facts.[4] But I have a vague feelmg that if the situation is not handled carefully, it might strengthen the communal elements there and weaken the influence of the Congress on the Muslim masses. It is because of this that I wrote on this subject previously. But having written I do not propose to do anything else. It is for you and your colleagues to take such action as you think fit and proper.

As for Karimganj, the facts that have been placed before me, and I have had sufficient matter from both sides, do leave a great doubt in my mind and in such matters I would like to give the benefit of the doubt to the parties proceeded against. Apart from the merits of the case the larger consideration of keeping effective workers together also influences me. A curious situation has arisen. We have no intimation whatever from the B.P.C.C. that any action has been taken. So in the ordinary course we have issued notices of the A.I.C.C. meeting to all our members. We are now asked by someone in Karimganj, to whom such a notice went, whether he can attend the meeting or not as the B.P.C.C. has taken action against him. As we have no official intimation we cannot take cognizance of this action, nor indeed do we know exactly what it is. We have referred him to the B.P.C.C.

You ask me whether we want you to revise the penalty already imposed. I do not even know what this penalty is and on whom it has been imposed, except rather vaguely. If you and Sarat feel, however, having regard to all the circumstances that it might be better to revise the penalty then certainly you might do so. That is for you to decide, keeping all the wider considerations before you.

I hope you will share this letter with Sarat.

I am thinking of going from Calcutta after the A.I.C.C. meeting to Assam and Sylhet for tour for a week or so. I have never been that way before. I shall not of course go into the local politics in these places. Still I should like to have your advice as to how to proceed in such matters when I go there. I have already informed the B.P.C.C. about this tour of mine. I shall finally fix it up in Calcutta.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. Some Congressmen in this district, against whom disciplinary action had been taken for having worked against the Congress candidates in the elections, had formed a rival Congress committee in order to capture the Congress organisation.

50. On the Shia Conference[1]

May I offer my congratulations to the All India Shia Political Conference[2] on its clear and unequivocal decision to support the Indian National Congress in the struggle for India's freedom? Their resolution on the constituent assembly has also been on identical lines put forward by the Congress. I rejoice at this, not because they have accepted the Congress resolution, but because they have considered these political questions apart from communal and other considerations.

It is refreshing to see this clarity of outlook. We may have any number of differences among ourselves on any number of questions. But when we consider the issue of national freedom, political or economic, there can be no "ifs" and "buts" and provisos. Those who add provisos care more for them than for the main objective and so the objective itself becomes secondary and even fades into insignificance. The question before each one of us always is what we should give the first place and what the second place. By that we are judged. The Shia conference has placed the first thing in the first place and has not sought to lessen its real significance by provisos. I congratulate the members of the conference and welcome them warmly to the ranks of those who fight for India's freedom.

1. Allahabad, 21 October 1937. *The Hindu*, 21 October 1937.
2. The All India Shia Political Conference was held on 11-12 October 1937 at Lucknow. They questioned the claim of the Muslim League to represent the entire Muslim community and resolved to join the Congress.

51. To Acharya Narendra Deva[1]

Allahabad
9-11-1937

My dear Narendra Deva,
I have just heard that the council meeting[2] has been postponed. I do not know what date will be fixed for it now and it is possible that I

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-20/1937, pp. 73-74, N.M.M.L.
2. Of the U.P.P.C.C.

may not be able to go there as I have many engagements. I am, however, going to Lucknow on the 15th and from there to Bara Banki the same day, returning that night to Allahabad.

Vague rumours have reached me about very active canvassing about the presidentship of the provincial conference. I do not mind such a canvassing but I do hope that this is not a prelude to bitter conflicts within the P.C.C. It is absolutely immaterial who is elected president and who is not. But it is very important that we must avoid the kind of unhealthy conflict within our ranks that we have had in the past. A very serious situation is arising in the U.P. in regard to communal matters. Some members of the Muslim League, enraged at their defeat at Bijnor,[3] are carrying on the most filthy and violent propaganda, even urging personal violence and not stopping at suggesting murder. This propaganda is directed chiefly against Congress Muslims and the Jamiat-ul-Ulema. We shall have to consider this situation very carefully for it requires tactful handling. There are other grave matters before us affecting all our future work. When I think of all this I am shocked at the pettiness people show in regard to elections and the like.

I have received a complaint by telegram from Lucknow about the declaration of Dr. Murarilal as president of the provincial conference. I do not propose to take any action as it is for the P.C.C. to decide finally. But this kind of reference to the A.I.C.C. is itself an undesirable indication of the growth of party factions.

The provincial conference dates were fixed for the 28th and 29th. But I understand that Aligarh people want the dates changed. It is possible that owing to the riot there and other factors a later date might be desirable.[4] Anyway a final decision should be made very soon. I am going to Assam at the end of November for a fortnight.

If it is possible for you to hold the council meeting on the 15th at Lucknow it would suit me, or even the 16th. An early meeting is desirable to decide about any dispute regarding the presidentship as well as the dates of the provincial conference.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. In the Bijnor-Najibabad Muslim rural constituency bye-election, Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim, the Congress candidate, defeated Abdus Sami, the Muslim League candidate, by a margin of over five thousand votes.
4. A Hindu-Muslim riot took place in Aligarh on 3 November 1937.

52. To Mohammad Ismail Khan[1]

Allahabad
November 10, 1937

My dear Nawab Sahib,

I am taking the liberty of writing to you as I am greatly distressed at the turn events have taken. The kind of things that are being said and written are likely to accentuate communal feelings very greatly and lead inevitably to great bitterness and possibly trouble. I am sure you want to avoid this as much as I do. During election contests exaggerated statements are often made which normally one would hesitate to say. Even so it has been my desire to prevent any such exaggeration from disfiguring our work and whenever my attention has been drawn to it, I have taken some action in the matter.

During the Bundelkhand election and even more so during the Bijnor election much was said on behalf of the Muslim League which astonished me. Still I thought that the fever of election held people and that this would pass. But I find that this continues and the violence of the speeches and writings is not only not conducive to clear thought, but can only lead to violence in action.

I do not quite know what our differences are in politics. I had imagined that they were not very great. But, whatever they might be, I am sure you will agree with me that it is highly desirable for all of us to keep to a certain standard in our public work and to avoid appeals to passion and bigotry. Only thus can public life grow and a question be considered dispassionately.

I presume that you think that the Congress has acted wrongly or is pursuing wrong ideals. You are perfectly entitled to think so and to say so. We are a political party and criticism is always good and helps in keeping an individual and a party up to the mark. I wish, however, that the criticism was specific and political. This would help us and the public in understanding it and perhaps in meeting it to some extent. I would be grateful to you if you could let me have this helpful criticism. What are the specific policies and programmes or principles of the Congress with which you do not agree? You will remember that you and Khaliquzzaman told us that you agreed with the Wardha programme of the Congress. That is a pretty comprehensive programme which includes almost everything that we stand for. Then there is the fundamental rights resolution of the Congress and our declarations on

1. *Nehru-Jinnah Correspondence*, (Allahabad, 1938).

the Communal Award. In Calcutta recently some of these previous resolutions relating to minority rights were assembled together in one comprehensive resolution[2] which you no doubt have seen. These resolutions cover religious matters, culture, language, script, etc.

On the language and script question I wrote a pamphlet giving the Congress viewpoint.[3] This had a very favourable reception all round and there was general agreement with its conclusion. I do not know if you have seen it. In any event I am sending a copy to you.

I think it would be definitely helpful to all concerned if we could define our points of agreement and points of difference. That would be fair to the public also, and we could then discuss or debate the points of difference. When you asked me to go to Lucknow to discuss with you the constituent assembly resolution, I gladly went although it involved upsetting my programme. We failed to agree about the wording of that resolution but our discussion clarified matters and showed that there was no great fundamental difference.

The principal object of my writing to you, however, is to draw your attention to the fantastic statements that have been and are being made by many people on behalf of the Muslim League. I cannot imagine that you agree with them and yet these statements go uncontradicted. And not only statements but acts which are not condemned. For instance, after the Bijnor election a volunteer on behalf of the Muslim League stabbed one of our respected workers in the train.[4] The volunteer might have got excited and I have no particular grievance against him, but the fact that this incident did not draw any condemnation from the leaders of the Muslim League surprised and distressed me.

Other kinds of violence have also been indulged in and, to my knowledge, incitements to violence have been and are frequent. The encouragement of this type of speech and activity can only lead to deplorable results.

2. The A.I.C.C. in its meeting in Calcutta held from 26 October to 1 November 1937, while drawing attention to its policy in regard to the rights of the minorities in India and to the fundamental rights resolution passed by it earlier, reiterated that "it considers it its duty to protect these rights and ensure the widest possible scope for the development of these minorities and their participation in the fullest measure in the political, economic and cultural life of the nation. The objective of the Congress is an independent and united India where no class or group or majority or minority may exploit another to its own advantage, and where all the elements in the nation may cooperate together for the common good and the advancement of the people of India."
3. See *post*, section 15, item 33.
4. Maulana Nasir-ud-din, a leading Congressman of Fyzabad, was stabbed on 28 October 1937.

The greatest stress has been laid during the Bijnor election campaign and subsequently on the fact that Islam is in danger and that the Congress is out to destroy Islam. Has this, or can it have, an atom of truth in it? Is it a fair statement even at election time? I would beg of you to consider this, for it hurts me to see such remarks made by responsible persons and responsible organisations. We are a political organisation working for political ends, which, of necessity, must be alike for Hindu and Muslim as well as other religious communities. We have declared in the most unequivocal terms that full religious and cultural freedom is guaranteed to every one and every group. Even if we had not so declared, is it conceivable by the wildest stretch of imagination that Islam can be suppressed by the Hindus in India or vice versa?

I enclose for your consideration extracts from notices and posters issued on behalf of the Muslim League during the Bijnor election and would beg you to consider if they are fair and legitimate statements.

It has been stated repeatedly that my statement that the Congress has nothing to do with religion implies active opposition to Islamic beliefs. It has further been declared that Congress Muslims are active atheists. Are either of these statements true?

In a manifesto issued by the joint secretary of the U.P. Muslim League Parliamentary Board during the Bijnor election, it was stated that the Congress had decided to suppress, to dominate over and finally to cripple the Muslims so that they might never rise again. It was further added that the Congress was determined to bring about such a transformation in the religious outlook of the Muslims that instead of prostrating themselves before Allah they should do so before Gandhi and Jawaharlal like the Hindus. The fantastic nature of these statements would lead one to attach little importance to them, but when they are made on behalf of a responsible organisation, one cannot dismiss them lightly.

In the course of speeches on behalf of the Muslim League candidate of Bijnor emphasis was laid on the following:

(1) The Congress wanted to suppress and eliminate Urdu.
(2) The Congress would stop *tazias*.
(3) The Congress would stop cow-killing.
(4) The Congress would force people to wear dhotis instead of pyjamas.
(5) The Congress bribed the Ulemas.

These, you will agree with me, are extraordinary and fantastic charges. The charge of bribing our respected colleagues of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema is so patently absurd that it is almost ludicrous. It was said to be supported by a letter which I wrote to Rafi Ahmad Kidwai at the time of the

Bundelkhand election. I sent this letter to the press some time back. I also sent a copy direct to Mr. Jinnah. Probably you have seen it. Do you think there is anything the least bit improper in it?

I have been accused, in a number of newspapers supporting the Muslim League, of having snatched away and torn off every flag bearing *Allah-o-Akbar* in Najibabad. This is a complete lie without the shadow of a foundation. I have no recollection of even seeing such a flag in Najibabad. As you know I move about in large crowds and anything that I do can be seen by thousands of persons.

It has been stated by Maulana Shaukat Ali that the peasant voters in Bijnor were threatened by tehsildars, patwaris, mahajans and landlords and thus induced to vote for the Congress candidates. Further, they were harassed at the polling stations if they came to support the Muslim League. I am not aware of any such incidents but if you can draw my attention to any I shall certainly inquire.

Dr. K.M. Ashraf has been made a special target and all manner of false statements have been attributed to him. It has been stated that he declared at the Ahrar conference that like the Russians, Mussolini and Hitler, we shall destroy every relic of religion and kill every religious person. It passes one's belief how such astounding lies can be given currency.

Information reaches us from our local committees that groups of workers for the Muslim League go about from village to village shouting offensive slogans, such as *Congress Murdabad, Gandhi Murdabad, Hindu Kafir hain, unko marne se ham bahisht jawenge.*[5] Written complaints to this effect have reached the Congress offices. I need not add that the villagers greatly resent this kind of thing and there might have been trouble if our people had not restrained them.

The widespread repetition of such falsehoods, the deliberate spread of religious fanaticism, and the open incitements to violence must excite and anger many persons and degrade our public life. I have referred above only to the statements made by responsible members of the Muslim League and to writings in well-known newspapers supporting the League. My list would be interminable if I referred to the filthy abuses by many irresponsible persons. The growth of this spirit of violence is evident. Maulvi Naseer attacked in the train after the Bijnor election, Mr. Abdul Hakim[6] shouted down at a meeting at Basti, Maulana

5. "Death to the Congress, death to Gandhi, Hindus are infidels, we shall reach heaven by killing them."
6. A leading Congressman of Basti; Deputy Speaker, U.P. Assembly, 1937-39.

Ahmad Said driven away from a public meeting in Madras, Sir Wazir Hasan in Delhi. I was in Cawnpore recently and many instances were reported to me.

Saddest of all perhaps has been the recent episode in Aligarh University. One can put up with much in the market place, but we have a right to expect a higher cultural level and some restraint in a university. And yet we had passion and violence there also. You are intimately connected with Aligarh and have no doubt looked up to it with pride. Does it not pain you to learn that many of the students of Aligarh, influenced by a speech delivered by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and apparently incited by their vice-chancellor, should behave in this manner?[7]

I do not want to exaggerate what is happening and I am sure it will tone down and be controlled. But what I worry about is the encouragement of and acquiescence in these deplorable events by responsible public men. Can we have any public life, or any life, if this is the background in which we function? With what self-respect can we look into each other's eyes, or into the eyes of the foreigner, if we forget the elemental courtesies and decencies of life? You and I and many of us have been entangled in public affairs for a long stretch of years and we have seen many ups and downs. We have, I hope, a measure of respect for each other. We came to politics not to find a profession, for we could have done well otherwise also. We came because we wanted to work for an objective we had at heart. We tried to live up to certain ideals and even when sorrow and difficulty encompassed us the thought of that objective and those ideals kept us going. It has not been the politician's game of electioneering that has kept us up to the mark. Elections come and go; we win or lose. But there are other things in life which have attracted us and given us strength even when disaster seemed to threaten us. But if those things go, life itself would lose its flavour, and public affairs would become a curse and an abomination.

I have written to you at great length and told you what I had in my heart. You will forgive me. I am distressed at the shaping of events and I want, with your help, to stop this rot.

One thing more. If you have any grievance or complaint against the Congress or its methods during the election or at any other time, I hope you will not hesitate to let me know, even as I have written to you

7. At a meeting of the Aligarh Muslim University Union on 4 November 1937 when K.M. Ashraf tried to calm down the feelings roused by the highly provocative and abusive speech made by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, he was manhandled by some of the Maulana's supporters.

frankly. We are a large organisation and things may be done on our behalf which are undesirable. We try to stop them whenever we can get hold of them.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

53. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
November 11, 1937

My dear Krishna,

...A very unfortunate development in India and specially in the U.P. in recent weeks has been a fierce communal campaign by the Muslim League. Fear of the growth of Congress influence among the Muslims and specially the Congress victory in the Bijnor bye-election, has led the Muslim League to most unscrupulous methods. There is no political or economic argument. It is just sheer religious fanaticism and a campaign of undiluted violence. When one sees what is being said and done, the virtue of full liberty of speech and writing seems to grow a little less. This campaign has had full play as the provincial government does not take any action. Everything up to murder on religious grounds is preached and the worst type of fanaticism is being roused.

Probably you were somewhat worried by what I wrote about Russia in a previous letter.[2] You hinted as much. Perhaps you imagine that some kind of Trotskyism is spreading in India. There is no such thing here. But the various trials in Russia this year of highly placed individuals gave a great shock to many people, mostly friends of Russia. Those trials might have been perfectly justified, but the mere fact that they occurred showed an unhealthy background. Why should there be this background more than twenty years after the revolution? Why should there be such complete suppression of civil liberty even so long after the militant period of the revolution and civil war? These questions

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. See *post*, section 12, item 12.

trouble one and I must confess I can find no satisfactory answers. They are more or less academic questions which do not affect our actions.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

54. To District Magistrate, Saharanpur[1]

Allahabad
11/12/37

Dear Kunwar Jasbir Singh,

I have just returned from the rural area around Saharanpur where I went to address some meetings. An incident occurred at a meeting at Mirzapur to which I should like to draw your attention. I arrived there at five, somewhat later than the appointed hour. I met an excited crowd of over a thousand persons on the road awaiting me. I was informed that some time earlier a group of persons headed by one Mr. Ali Ahmad of Raipur had come to the meeting which was waiting for me and created some disturbance. A group of Muslim League volunteers had also come about the same time in a motor bus. After a while they tried to snatch the national flag and in doing so they belaboured several persons. This action was resented and there was fear of retaliation when the Congressmen present appealed to the crowd not to retaliate in any way. The flag was snatched away, broken and torn. Just then news came that I was arriving. Therefore the crowd, or most of it, went to the roadside to see me and meanwhile the *durries* and other articles were removed from the meeting place, apparently by the persons who had come with Mr. Ali Ahmad, and taken away. His party retired hurriedly and so did the Muslim League volunteers on the bus. By the time I arrived they had all gone.

I was further told that Mr. Shah Nazar of Behat, who I understand is a special magistrate, was present for part of the time before my arrival. He left before the flag was snatched and torn.

This kind of thing indicates an extraordinary state of affairs and it is likely to lead to trouble on the election day. In particular any attempt to dishonour the national flag is greatly resented and I for my part am not prepared to tolerate it even if this leads to trouble.

1. J.N. Correspondenee, N.M.M.L.

I might mention that a report of the affair has been lodged at the Behat police station.

I am leaving Saharanpur early tomorrow morning.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

55. To Masood Husain[1]

Camp Lucknow
December 22, 1937

Dear Mr. Masood Husain,[2]

I have your letter.[3] I entirely agree with you in what you say about Urdu notices being distributed and also that the language should be Hindustani. I understand that Urdu notices have been distributed. As for the language of the notice itself, I find, apart from about half a dozen words, the language is simple and ordinary Hindustani. So that the notice taken as a whole consisting of several hundred words is in proper language. It is impossible to object to a few individual words as this depends so much on the writer of the notice. You must also remember that the notice is written chiefly for the villagers and words are used which they are likely to understand.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-20(i)/1937, p. 237, N.M.M.L.
2. A vakil of Basti.
3. He had complained that the notices for the provincial conference at Aligarh had been issued in Hindi only and had many Sanskrit words in them.

56. To Mohammad Ismail Khan[1]

Allahabad
December 26, 1937

My dear Nawab Sahib,

I must apologise to you for the delay in answering your letter of December 1st.[2] It reached me about the middle of the month on my return from Assam and I have been overwhelmed with work since then.

You suggest that I have been hasty in arriving at certain conclusions on the basis of information supplied by interested parties. It may be so and perhaps on a fuller consideration of all the evidence I might vary my opinion. Indeed I wrote to you in order to balance the facts and accusations in my possession with such as you might draw my attention to. Any person, however judicial-minded he might be, is invariably influenced to some extent by what he sees and hears. I have seen something and I have heard a great deal about the activities of some of the workers on behalf of the League and I have been influenced thereby. But essentially my distress was due to the whole background of the Muslim League propaganda, as evidenced by their official leaflets and notices and other statements. All this was intensely communal and anti-Congress. Political questions were hardly referred to and the stress was on religious and communal questions, which did not arise at all. This seems to me a grave disservice to any community and to the nation, for progress comes through the development of the political mentality in a group. Nationalism is obviously a higher ideal than communalism in so far as politics is concerned.

I am writing this reply in some haste and therefore I cannot deal very fully now with all the points you have referred to. Nor do I think it desirable for us to waste our energy in discussing all manner of personal complaints and allegations. I shall only say this that a very large number of complaints have reached me of needless aggression on the part of persons calling themselves Muslim Leaguers. The national flag has been torn and pulled down, Congress meetings in villages interfered with, and speeches of a violent and provocative kind delivered. Some of these instances I have investigated myself.

1. *Nehru-Jinnah Correspondence*, (Allahabad, 1938).
2. He had written: "I am sure that you must be aware that the nationalist press has been vilifying and calumniating our most respected leaders without any protest from any Congress public man of eminence. The patience of the Mussalmans is well-nigh exhausted and if they, therefore, hit back, it may be occasionally below the belt, you should not feel greatly horrified..."

The flag issue is now being raised. So far as we are concerned we have not raised any objection to the Muslim League flag being put up or displayed. But do you not think that this is definitely a step back which will lead to all manner of complications? The Hindu Mahasabha and the Sikh League and Christian associations will put up their flags in public places with equal justification. That surely is not the way to promote unity and consolidation and nationalism or to advance to the freedom of India. For all these years we have treated the tricolour flag as the national flag of India and it has gained a widespread respect and currency. Purposely it was designed to signify the unity of India: one of its colours was green to signify the Muslims. Maulana Mohamed Ali (and probably Maulana Shaukat Ali also) hoisted it on numerous occasions and spoke eloquently on its significance. Chaudhri Khaliquzzaman had it hoisted on the Lucknow Municipal Board buildings and elsewhere. Is he now going to put up the Muslim League flag or a variety of flags representing different communities?

It is all this background of communalism, separatism, anti-nationalism and a non-political consideration of political issues, that distresses me. I realise and appreciate that the Muslim League, in so far as its resolutions are concerned, has come much nearer to the Congress politically. That is a welcome advance. But the background does not fit in with this; indeed it is in direct contradiction with it. Take again the fact that many of the present leaders of the Muslim League (I do not refer to you or to Mr. Jinnah) sided completely with the British Government throughout our struggles with it, and some of them actively cooperated with the most reactionary conservatives and diehards in England. Am I to understand that they are converts to independence and direct action now?

One particular statement in your letter has surprised me exceedingly. This is about the stabbing incident after the Bijnor election. You say that after inquiry you found that the volunteer who stabbed a Congress worker had sufficient provocation to justify the act. Now this seems to me very strange. My own information is that the person stabbed is an exceedingly mild and quiet individual and in fact that he was probably stabbed in error for someone else. But, even otherwise, do you think a provocative remark is enough to justify stabbing?

You draw my attention to offensive remarks and statements made by persons working on behalf of the Congress. You agree, I think, that Congressmen as such have not made them but that some *maulvies* and Ahrars have done so. It may be so and I am exceedingly sorry for it. One or two instances were brought to my notice during my election tours

and I expressed my strong disapproval of them. Certainly I am prepared to condemn all such remarks by whomsoever made. Unfortunately I seldom have time to see the Urdu or Hindi press and cannot follow its outbursts. As for the so-called nationalist press in English, there has certainly been anti-Muslim League propaganda but this has been political, I suppose. I do not remember seeing anything personal. In any event please remember that the Congress does not control any single such newspaper. They are vaguely nationalist because they cater for a public which prefers that outlook and they criticise individuals and groups in the Congress, including me, pretty vigorously. I disapprove entirely of many of their policies but I am unable to control them.

I have not seen the dramatic piece[3] which appeared in the *Hindustan*, nor have I read Sardar Sardul Singh's speech[4] to which you refer.

I might remind you that last May or June, when I was in Burma, my attention was drawn to certain references to Mr. Jinnah in the Gujarati press. These papers were not Congress papers; indeed they were partly anti-Congress. I did not myself see what they had written but on being told that they had indulged in personal criticism, I deprecated this and publicly apologised to Mr. Jinnah, although I was in no way concerned with the papers.[5]

You refer to the Congress mass contact movement as if this was started as a challenge to the Muslim League.[6] Allow me to assure you that it is nothing of the kind. You may or may not agree with the ideology behind it, but you will appreciate, I hope, that it has nothing to do with Hindu or Muslim as such. It is the natural development of an organisation towards the masses. I laid stress on it in April 1936 in my Lucknow Congress address[7] and since then we have been pushing it.

3. This was a parody written by Athar Rasheed on the Muslim League session held at Lucknow.
4. In his presidential address at the Punjab Political Conference, he had said: "... the cause of political independence of this country cannot be allowed to be retarded by schismatic tendencies of self-seekers who use religious and cultural catch-phrases to mislead the unsophisticated masses...Communal leaders who wouldn't sacrifice the crease of their trousers for community or country, often speak of facing realities, not knowing that the world of realities is much wider than the tip of their nose, beyond which these communal leaders are unable to see anything."
5. See *ante*, item 6.
6. He had stated: "It is possible that the situation may improve after the elections are over, though I am not sure whether the mass contact movement which is being carried on aggressively by the Congress among the Muslims will not continue to cause friction and maintain the present tension."
7. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 170-195.

A few months later I pointed out that it had lagged behind so far as the Muslims were concerned and urged Congressmen to push it among them. Whatever the shortcomings and errors of the Congress might be, it is in conception and even in practice a national movement. It has no other *raison d'etre*. It cannot admit the argument that it must not function in a particular religious group. For if it does so, it ceases to be national. If it does so, it must also retire from other such groups, and ultimately it must fade away. There is no middle course.

We are a political organisation with our doors open to all and trying to function on the national plane. In the interests of Indian unity and freedom it is essential that there should be such an organisation. There is no other. It may be that occasionally this organisation errs in a communal or group matter. If so every effort must be made to put it right. To attack it as an organisation and try to weaken it is to attack the conception of Indian unity itself and of nationalism and freedom. What will take its place? And what of all of us if there is no such organisation?

We go to elections of course in the hope of winning a seat. But I hope you will remember that we aim higher. Winning seats does not carry us far. We are out to develop the people politically and to organise them for the fight for freedom. Elections give us an opportunity for this and so we welcome them. An election run on personal issues or other side issues is of no use to us whatsoever; indeed it injures our cause.

You refer to the belief that the Congress is trying to destroy Muslim solidarity. That is often said but I do not understand it at all. There can be and should be religious or cultural solidarity. But when we enter the political plane, the solidarity is national, not communal; when we enter the economic plane the solidarity is economic. The Congress is out to build up national solidarity and at the same time to preserve in every way possible the cultural solidarity of different groups.

It is very unfair of anyone to charge Muslim supporters of the Congress with being financed by the Congress.[8] Naturally in our elections we help our candidates, Hindu or Muslim. Apart from this what is meant? If it is hinted at that Muslims in the Congress are there for love of money it is a calumny and a falsehood. Our finances are perfectly above board and can be inspected. In our various offices there are a number of Hindu as well as Muslim wholetime workers who are paid a maintenance allowance, which is usually far less than what they

8. He had said: "...the Muslim supporters of the Congress are being financed and helped by the Congress which, as at present constituted, is an overwhelmingly Hindu body, to fight their co-religionists and subdue them..."

can earn otherwise or what they were actually getting before they joined us.

You refer to the appointment to ministerial offices of persons who have abjured their parties and only recently joined the Congress. Presumably you refer to Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim. I think you are very unfair to him. Perhaps you do not know that Hafiz Ibrahim has been a Congressman for years past and has held office in Congress committees. He left the League Parliamentary Board long before the ministries were formed on the ground that the board was allying itself to reactionary elements which had opposed the League and the Congress in the general elections. That attitude was a perfectly comprehensible and justifiable one, whether one agreed with it or not. Subsequently as you know he resigned and sought election again. What more can man do?

I hope however that now that the elections are over all these matters and disputes will tone down and gradually vanish away, allowing us to consider our national problems dispassionately. You write that you agree with the Congress programme as outlined in the Wardha resolution of the Working Committee. You agree that politically speaking there seem to be no vital differences between the Congress and the League, and then you ask me to point out where we differ from you.[9] Perhaps this letter will help you to appreciate our viewpoint. It is not for us to seek out differences, it is our business to remove them. We are a political organisation trying with such ability and energy as we possess to work for a certain end. In the nature of things, being a national organisation we work among all classes and groups in India. This means no ill will to other groups or individuals. Our effort must necessarily be to gain their goodwill. So far as the minorities are concerned it is our declared aim and purpose to go out of our way even to gain their goodwill. So if we agree in such a large measure why should we not carry on in a friendly way?

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

9. He wrote: "...as far as the interest of the whole country is concerned, there is not much difference between the policies and programmes of the two organisations...I may be permitted the liberty of stating that if this mass contact movement had not been thrust upon us and if the Muslim League parties had not in the various legislatures been so contemptuously treated by the Congress, wherever they happened to be in majority, the Mussalmans would have been nearer the Congress ideals today than they are likely to be for some considerable time to come..."

57. Misreporting in the Press[1]

Unfortunately I have no time to read the Hindi and Urdu press, especially of the Punjab and Delhi. Rarely when I see it I am astonished and grieved at the kind of propaganda that is carried on in many of these papers and at the number of wrong statements made. My attention has just been drawn to some of these statements and I am astounded that any one should have made such false statements about me. One of these is that I have refused to see Mr. Jinnah. This is wholly false. Another remarkable statement is that I am encouraging the Shahidganj agitation and it is stated that I have promised to give a large sum of money to the Ahrars for this purpose. This is absolutely and maliciously false. I entirely disapprove of this agitation and everybody knows that the Congress does not permit any kind of civil disobedience at the present moment. As for my promising money for this or anything else, the charge is a scandalous one which no person with a spark of decency could have made. Our Congress accounts are audited and placed before the public.

Another false statement was that I had pulled down the Muslim League flag at Najibabad some time back. There is not a shadow of a foundation for this. No Congressman has any business to interfere in any way with any such flag. I regret that communal flags should be given prominence as this must inevitably mean a multiplicity of flags and emphasise separatist tendencies. Our national flag was deliberately chosen to represent all communities and groups in India. It was and is the common flag of India, representing the unity of India, as Maulana Mohamed Ali so often emphasized. But I do not wish to force it on anyone nor do I wish to interfere with any other flag.

I would appeal with all earnestness to all journalists and newspapermen not to give publicity to rumours and unauthorised reports or to anything which increases bitterness. They have a heavy responsibility and they must prove worthy of it. To the public I would appeal not to believe in anything which is not authorised and proved to be authentic. I am always prepared to confirm or deny any piece of news. Without such confirmation or denial anything relating to me should not be believed.

1. Statement to the press, Harduaganj, 30 December 1937. *The Tribune*, 31 December 1937.

58. To Mela Ram[1]

Camp Harduaganj
December 31, 1937

My dear Mela Ram,
Owing to Muslim League propaganda a very serious situation is arising in many parts of the province. We have to handle this very tactfully. Apart from the big issues involved, we have to see that small grievances are met and there are no petty points of conflicts.

In Saharanpur there are some matters of this kind which deserve immediate attention. Probably it was largely because of them that we lost the election. It is possible that unless they are settled quickly a worse situation might arise.

I am therefore writing to you to request you to do your utmost to get these matters settled. It is better to err on the side of generosity in such cases for we have to look at them from a larger political objective. Mohanlal Saxena has been specially asked by the council of the P.C.C. to visit Saharanpur to look into these matters.

These matters are:

(1) The Idgah dispute[2] which you know well. This must be settled and the person owning the land be induced to part with it for the Idgah.

(2) The question of the chairmanship of the municipal board or the district board and of the education committee. We understand that if one of these chairmanships does not go to a Muslim member there will be great irritation among the Muslims. I trust, therefore, that it will be possible for a Muslim member to be elected to one of them.

(3) The question of retrenchment of the Muslim clerks in the municipal board. In this matter a little generosity would well repay our efforts.

We consider these Saharanpur matters as having more than local importance. It is therefore that I am writing to you and Mohanlal Saxena is going there in a day or two. I do hope that you will be

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-20(i)/1937, p. 229, N.M.M.L.
2. This dispute was over cow sacrifice in Gangoh in Saharanpur district.

able to put right these unfortunate matters. We have spoken to Ajit Prasad[3] of course.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. Ajit Prasad Jain (b. 1902); member, U.P. Assembly, 1937-39 and 1946-47; member, Constituent Assembly, 1947-50; member, Lok Sabha, 1952-65; Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation, Government of India, 1950-54 and Minister for Food and Agriculture, 1954-59; president, U.P.P.C.C., 1961-64; Governor of Kerala, 1965-66; chairman, Irrigation Commission of India since 1969; member, Rajya Sabha, 1968-72.

59. The Need for a Dispassionate Approach[1]

From press reports it appears that Mr. M.A. Jinnah has issued some kind of a challenge to me, though I have not been able to make out what this is about and why he should think it necessary to issue challenges.[2] Nor have I any recollection of any previous challenge to which he refers. Mr. Jinnah is further reported to have said that he is fighting the Congress leadership which is misleading the Hindus. In the same week Mr. Fazlul Huq has called upon Muslims to prepare for direct action against Hindus and has threatened to use a big rod against those he disapproves of.[3] He looks forward to communal conflicts and prophesies dire happenings in which he will play a prominent role. All this frank incitement to communalism and hatred and conflict is strange

1. Statement to the press, Bombay, 1 January 1938. *The Hindustan Times,* 3 January 1938.
2. Speaking at Calcutta on 26 December 1937 Jinnah said: "I am not fighting Hindus. I am fighting a leadership which is misleading Hindus...I had thrown out a challenge many months ago to Jawaharlal Nehru and I throw out the challenge now. Let him come and sit with us and let us formulate a constructive and practical and ameliorative programme which will remove poverty and hunger and give immediate relief to the poor."
3. At a meeting of the All India Muslim Students Federation at Calcutta on 28 December 1937, Fazlul Huq said: "...I have got a stern rod for those who preach communalism and disturb the peace of the country. We must hold fast and avoid all separatist tendencies. We are surrounded by enemies on all sides and we must therefore be ready for the fight."

language which one has not associated so far with political leaders and those in positions of responsibility. I have no taste or aptitude for controversy of this kind and I can only regret that matters which should be discussed dispassionately and with the ordinary courtesies of public life should be dealt with in such a manner. Whoever wishes to fight the Congress on the communal issue will have to fight in the air, for the Congress will have nothing to do with such internecine conflicts. We have fought, not without success, the mighty power of British imperialism and that fight we shall continue till imperialism flourishes no more in India. In that fight we shall gladly cooperate with every individual and group in India, whatever our minor differences might be. We think in terms of no other fight, and we shall strain every nerve and do our utmost to gain the confidence and goodwill of all our countrymen. Mr. Fazlul Huq's approach is one of threats and angry defiance. Mr. Jinnah's approach is anything but friendly. But I should like to assure Mr. Jinnah, on behalf of my colleagues and myself, that even without the issue of challenges, any statement or proposal by Mr. Jinnah will always have the most careful consideration. We are always prepared to sit down and consider any of the problems which afflict India. So far as the minorities question is concerned, it is the declared and well-established policy of the Congress not only to do full justice to them, but to go even beyond that in order to inspire confidence and goodwill in them. The Congress can conceive of no freedom for India which is not an equal freedom for all the various religious communities which inhabit India and in which all do not share equally and have full opportunities of growth and development. So far as religious and cultural matters are concerned it has given the fullest possible assurances and declared that these should be incorporated in our fundamental rights in the constitution. A further assurance has been given in regard to personal law. In regard to certain political rights, the Communal Award stands for the present and we have stated repeatedly that we seek no change except with the concurrence of those concerned. We have further declared that we shall stand by the provisional agreement which was arrived at between Babu Rajendra Prasad, acting as Congress President, and Mr. Jinnah. What remains? If there is anything of importance left over, let us have it out by all means and consider it. My difficulty is that I do not know what the argument is about.

Essentially the Congress is a political body acting on the national and political plane, and inevitably dealing with economic questions. All these overlap communal and religious boundaries. Because of the strength that has come to the Congress from the organised masses of this country, and because of the growing importance of India, the Congress

functions also to some extent on the international plane. This is bound to grow. This also has nothing to do with religious or communal questions.

I welcome the recent re-orientation of the Muslim League and some of its resolutions which have brought it much nearer, in theory at least, to the Congress. I welcome its new objective of independence.[4] I hope this theory will be translated into practice and strengthen the anti-imperialist struggle.

I would beg Mr. Jinnah to remember what the Congress is today. It is very different from what it was in the days when he was associated with it. During this period it has grown remarkably and is today an organisation with thirty one lakhs of members actually on its rolls, of whom about a hundred thousand are Muslims. It influences scores of millions of others. But apart from the vast numbers it influences, it has succeeded by its continuous work among the masses and its campaigns of direct action, in developing political consciousness among the people and in creating strength and self-reliance in them. These millions, though more disciplined than ever before and capable of united action, are not dumb sheep who can be driven at the will of a few leaders, howsoever honoured and respected the latter might be. Even our village committees are vital bodies having a will of their own and striving to express it. The Congress is thus a vast democratic organisation, influenced greatly by its leadership no doubt, but essentially reacting to the pressure and urges coming up from its tens of thousands of local committees.

What are our major problems today? Politically, the fight against the proposed federation and for independence; socially and in the sphere of economics, the fight against poverty and unemployment, and the necessity to lighten the burdens of our masses and raise their standards to human levels. There are ever so many other matters of importance and demanding attention—education, medical relief and sanitation, the development of planned industry—but before we can grapple with them the basic problems must be solved. In facing these basic problems of federation and independence and poverty and unemployment we come up against great vested interests, imperialistic and semi-feudal. The recent decisions of the Muslim League lead me to hope that that organisation is beginning to think of their problems in the same light as

4. At its Lucknow session held from 15 to 18 October 1937 the Muslim League passed a resolution "to establish in India full independence in the form of a federation of free and democratic states in which rights and interests of Mussalmans and other minorities are adequately safeguarded in the constitution."

we have done for so many years. If so, let us cooperate by all means with each other and with all other anti-imperialist elements in the country in this fight for freedom, whether the method of fighting is by direct action or otherwise.

May I express the hope that any further approach to the communal or minorities question will be a dispassionate one, and will not seek to rouse bitterness and hatred which can never help in the consideration of any problem? In this dynamic and revolutionary age, pregnant with big possibilities, those of us who have a measure of influence with our countrymen dare not lose sight of the big things or encourage passions which weaken us and lower us in the world's esteem.

60. To Mohammad Ismail Khan[1]

Bombay
2/1/38

My dear Nawab Sahib,

I wrote to you from Allahabad just before my departure and sent this letter to Lucknow thinking that you might be there. I hope you received it. Later I read the press reports of the Muslim students' conference held in Calcutta at which Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Fazlul Huq spoke. I do not know if you agree with the aggressive and defiant approach which their speeches displayed but I was grieved and distressed at it. I had no desire whatever to carry on a controversy but in view of Mr. Jinnah's "challenge" to me, I had to say something in reply. I have today issued a statement[2] to the press, a copy of which I enclose.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See the preceding item.

61. To Mohammad Ismail Khan[1]

Lucknow
Jan. 18, 1938

My dear Nawab Sahib,

Thank you for your letter which I received some days ago.[2] I have been in Lucknow for the last three days, but unfortunately I have been so busy with our provincial Congress meetings that I had no opportunity of meeting you.

You must have seen Mr. Jinnah's recent statement.[3] I can only express my regret that he has issued this aggressive statement which does not help much. But the questions we have to consider are more important than the method of approach and I shall therefore not enter into needless controversy. But my difficulty remains. What are these points of dispute? I wish you could enlighten me so that we might consider them and come to grips with them. May I therefore request you to let me know what these points of dispute are?

I am just leaving for Lahore and the Frontier Province. I hope to be back in Allahabad in ten days' time.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Welcoming Jawaharlal's statement of 1 January 1938, Mohammad Ismail Khan wrote to him: "...I congratulate you on your statesmanship in making the position of the Congress clear at an opportune moment. I have no doubt that it will elicit a suitable response from Mr. Jinnah. I agree with you that Mr. Fazlul Haq's speech as reported in the press shows not only bad taste, but is most offensive."
3. In a statement issued on 10 January 1938, Jinnah had said: "...I want Jawaharlal Nehru to realise that neither he nor the Congress is yet in a position of a sovereign power to make declarations and give assurance....I hope that the events of the last two months must have convinced the Congress High Command that the Muslim League must be recognised on a footing of complete equality."

62. To M. A. Jinnah[1]

Lucknow
January 18, 1938

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

I have read the statement you issued recently to the press with care. I am afraid we approach the question from differing viewpoints and I feel that your approach is not very helpful. But I entirely agree with you that an argument carried on through the medium of the press is not desirable. Indeed I had decided not to issue press statements on the subject, but after your Calcutta speech, in which you mentioned my name and issued some kind of a 'challenge' to me, I felt that a public statement was unavoidable. Hence my statement, in which I tried to avoid unnecessary controversy.

You know perhaps that for some months past I have been in correspondence with Nawab Ismail Khan on this subject and I have been anxious to find out what the points of difference and agreement were. I am afraid I do not know this yet and your last statement does not help. I would feel grateful to you if you could kindly throw some light on this and let me know what exactly are the points in dispute which require consideration. I think this will help us all and lead to an avoidance of needless controversy. We can then come to grips with the subject. As I have said in my last statement, we are eager to do everything in our power to put an end to every misapprehension and to endeavour to solve every problem that comes in the way of our developing our public life along right lines and promoting the unity and progress of the Indian people.

I am leaving for Lahore today. From there I go to the Frontier Province and return to Allahabad in about ten days' time. Kindly address your reply[2] to Allahabad.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. *Nehru-Jinnah Correspondence*, (Allahabad, 1938).
2. Replying to Jawaharlal on 25 January, Jinnah wrote: "...I fail to see what you are driving at. It does not suggest any useful proposal of concrete character... you further refer to my Calcutta speech...But you do not even now give me the purport of my speech and what was the challenge which compelled you to say, what you did, in your statement which you consider unavoidable..."

63. To M. A. Jinnah[1]

Wardha
February 4, 1938

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

Your letter of the 25th January reached Allahabad on February 1st after I had left. It has been forwarded to me here and reached me yesterday.

I am sorry that my previous letter was difficult to understand. My purpose in writing it was, as I stated, to find out what our points of difference and agreement were.[2] Presumably there are points of difference as you have repeatedly criticised the Congress policy and practice. If these points of difference are noted down and our attention drawn to them it would make their consideration easier. It is possible that some of them may be due to misapprehension and this misapprehension might be removed; it is equally possible that some are more fundamental and then we would try to find a way out, or, at any rate, know exactly how and where we stand. When there is a conflict of opinion, a clarification of the opposing opinions is an essential preliminary to their consideration.

I might mention some relatively minor matters which have apparently led to misapprehension. In one of your speeches you referred to being told by someone that a cheque for rupees five lakhs was recently given to the Congress. I am not aware of this and presumably I ought to know. Indeed, to my knowledge, no one has given even a cheque for Rs. 5,000 to the Congress for a considerable time.

In the same or possibly another speech, you referred to the noncooperation days and stated that while the Aligarh University was forced to close down and many noncooperated from it, not a single student noncooperated from the Banaras University. As a matter of fact a very large number of students did in fact noncooperate from the Banaras University. As a result of this, a non-official university, the Kashi Vidyapith, was established in Banaras, as also the Gandhi Ashram. Both of these still exist. In the same way the Jamia Millia came into existence in Aligarh and this now flourishes in Delhi.

You have referred in your speeches to the Congress imposing Hindi-Hindustani and trying to crush Urdu. I presume you were misinformed

1. *Nehru-Jinnah Correspondence*, (Allahabad, 1938).
2. Jinnah replied: "I note your request that I should let you know 'what exactly are the points in dispute which require consideration'...But do you think that this matter can be discussed, much less solved, through correspondence? I am afraid that is equally undesirable."

for I am not aware of any attempt on the part of the Congress to injure Urdu. Some time back I wrote an essay on "The Question of Language"[3] which represents, I believe, the Congress viewpoint. It was approved by Mr. Gandhi and by many people unconnected with the Congress and interested in the advancement of Urdu, including Maulvi Abdul Huq, secretary, Anjuman-e-Taraqqi-e-Urdu of Hyderabad. I do not know if you have come across this essay. In any event I am asking my office in Allahabad to send you a copy. If you disagree with the argument or conclusions of this essay I shall be grateful to have your criticisms.

I might mention that the Congress ministry in Madras is endeavouring to introduce the study of Hindustani in the state schools in the province. They are having primers and textbooks prepared especially for the purpose by the Jamia Millia. These primers etc. are to be in two scripts—Devanagri and Urdu—but in identical language, the students having the option of script.

I mention these instances to show how misapprehensions arise. But the real questions at issue are more important and it is in regard to these that clarification is necessary. I presume you are acquainted with the Congress resolutions and statements on minority and fundamental rights and regarding communal questions. If you so wish it, I can have these sent to you. Many of these were collected together in a comprehensive resolution passed by the Working Committee in Calcutta towards the end of October 1937. About the Communal Award the Congress position has been repeatedly made clear.

The Congress policy as laid down in these resolutions may be incomplete or wrong. If so, we shall gladly consider suggestions to complete it or rectify it. Personally I do not see what more can be done by the Congress regarding religious or cultural matters. As for political (communal) questions, the Communal Award, unsatisfactory as it is, holds the field for the present and till such time as it may be altered by mutual agreement of the parties concerned.

In considering wider political questions, the Congress has adhered to certain principles and policies for a number of years, though minor variations have taken place from time to time. Our present policy in the legislatures and outside was defined by a comprehensive resolution passed by the Working Committee at Wardha last year. I was very glad to find from Nawab Ismail Khan and Chowdhry Khaliquzzaman that the U.P. Muslim League, or the U.P. Muslim League Parliamentary Board, accepted this programme. This included our objective of

3. See *post*, section 15, item 33.

independence, our demand for a constituent assembly, our general attitude to the constitution, the Act and the federation, and our methods of work inside and outside the legislatures. It referred also to our agrarian and labour programmes. Thus there appeared to be a very large measure of agreement between us, not only in regard to fundamentals, but even regarding many details.

In view of this agreement it distressed and surprised me to find that there was so much conflict. I have tried therefore to find out what this conflict is about. I do not see how I can make any proposal, concrete or vague, when I do not know what the points in issue are. It is true that in reading your speeches I have come across various statements to the effect that the Congress is trying to establish Hindu raj. I am unaware of how this is being done or who is doing it. If any Congress ministries or the Congress organisations have made mistakes, these should be pointed out to us.

A report of your Calcutta speech appeared in the newspapers at the time and is no doubt available to you and for me to give you a purport of it seemed hardly necessary. In this you state that you are fighting the Congress, that you are fighting the Congress leadership which is misleading the Hindus. Further you have said that you want to bring the Congress High Command to its senses.[4] May I suggest that those who are privileged to advise or lead the Congress have no desire to fight anybody except British imperialism? In any event, if we mislead or misbehave we have a right to enquire from our critics where and how we have done so.

Further in your Calcutta speech you said: "I had long long ago, months ago now, thrown out a challenge to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and I throw out a challenge now—let him come and sit with us and let us formulate a constructive programme which will give immediate relief to the poor". It was to this 'challenge' that I referred in my last letter. I do not remember on which previous occasion you had issued a similar challenge to me.

It is always helpful to discuss matters and problems face to face, and, as I have said previously, we are always glad to do so. A short while

4. In his concluding address to the All India Muslim Students Federation in Calcutta on 28 December 1937, Jinnah said: "...Ours is a just position and if we are united, we have nothing to fear. If we are united, I feel confident that a large body of Hindus will agree with us that the Congress High Command must be brought to their senses...While we want to raise ourselves to the highest stature, our hands of cooperation for the good of the country are always fully stretched out but on equal terms. We are not going to be subdued or be camp-followers or a subject race of the Hindu raj."

ago you met Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, one of our most respected leaders, than whom there is no one better fitted to explain the Congress viewpoint in regard to the minorities problem or any other matter. Whenever necessity arises every one of us will willingly welcome a talk. But even such a talk is likely to be vague and infructuous if some clarification of ideas does not take place previously. Correspondence helps in this process and sometimes is even preferable as it is more precise than talk. I trust therefore that you will help in clarifying the position by telling us where we differ and how you would like this difference to end. You have also criticised the Congress in vigorous language, as you were no doubt entitled to do. But are we not entitled to ask you to substantiate those criticisms in private at least, if not in public?

I have inquired from Mr. Gandhi about your letter[5] to him dated the 5th November, 1937. He received it in Calcutta when he was lying ill there and he felt that it needed no answer. Your letter had been in answer to his and the matter seemed to end there for the time being. He was good enough to show me his letter and yours and it seemed to me that no particular reply was called for. I understand that he wrote to you yesterday.[6]

I hope to be in Allahabad by the 9th February.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

5. Jinnah, in reply to Mahatma Gandhi's letter of 19 October 1937, had written: "I am sorry you think my speech at Lucknow is a declaration of war. It is purely in self-defence. Kindly read it again and try and understand it. Evidently you have not been following the course of events in the last twelve months. As to reserving you as a 'bridge' and 'peace-maker', don't you think your complete silence for all these months identified you with the Congress leadership, although I know you are not even a four-anna member of that body..."
6. Mahatma Gandhi in reply wrote: "You complain of my silence. The reason for my silence is literally and truly in my note. Believe me, the moment I can do something that can bring the two communities together nothing in the world can prevent me so doing. You seem to deny that your speech was a declaration of war, but your later pronouncements too confirm my first impression. How can I prove what is a matter of feeling? In your speeches I miss the old nationalist. When in 1915 I returned from my self-imposed exile in South Africa everybody spoke of you as one of the staunchest of nationalists and the hope of both the Hindus and Mussalmans. Are you still the same Jinnah? If you say you are, in spite of your speeches, I shall accept your word.

Lastly, you want me to come forward with some proposal. What proposal can I make except to ask you on bended knees to be what I thought you were? But the proposals to form a basis of unity between the two communities have surely got to come from you."

64. To Mohammad Ismail Khan[1]

Wardha
4/2/38

My dear Nawab Sahib,

Your two letters dated 16th January and 29th January apparently came together and missed me in Allahabad. They have been forwarded to me here and have just reached me. I shall reply to them more fully later. But I hasten to correct a misunderstanding which appears in the last paragraph of your letter of the 16th January.[2]

I am glad you have written about this to me and drawn my attention to it. The report made to you was entirely incorrect. At a meeting somewhere—I forget the name of the place—I was interrupted several times. I asked the interrupters what they wanted and what their grievances were. They were unable to give me a satisfactory reply. I said that I did not know what the vital differences between the Congress and the Muslim League were and I wanted to know what these were. I said further that Nawab Ismail Khan and Choudhry Kaliquzzaman had assured us on their own behalf and on behalf of their colleagues that they accepted the Congress objective and programme and we had nearly come to an agreement. But unfortunately this fell through on the question of the formation of the ministry. Thus there were no fundamental differences.

May I request you to give a message to Khaliquzzaman? I would have written to him separately but I am rushed for work at present. Someone told me that he complained of having sent three letters to Gandhiji to which he had no reply. I enquired from Gandhiji and he tells me that he has received no letter at all from him.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Ismail Khan had drawn Jawaharlal's attention to a report of his speech in Saharanpur district that "the League was creating all this trouble because 'Ismail Khan wanted two Ministerships to which the Congress ministers did not agree'."

65. To Mohammad Ismail Khan[1]

Wardha
5/2/38

My dear Nawab Sahib,

To continue my letter of yesterday's date.

The Congress mass contact movement has never been thought of in terms of Muslims only or confined to them.[2] It was thought of in terms of extending the organisation and influence of the Congress among all classes of people. In a sense it has been in existence for many years but it took more pointed shape at the Lucknow Congress of 1936. No mention was made of Muslims at the time. Later on, and quite apart from elections, I laid stress on carrying it on more particularly amongst the Muslims. The elections came and afterwards again we emphasized it. This was in furtherance of our general programme as a political body. It was not directed against the Muslim League.

Naturally we welcomed noted Muslim ulemas when they joined the Congress. We welcomed other Muslims also who were politicians and economists. So far as we were concerned we had no desire to emphasise the religious aspect of any question through these ulemas. Some of these ulemas were old colleagues of ours in the Congress or the khilafat movement, and though their viewpoint was not purely political, it was definitely political in most matters that concerned us. You are right in saying that during the elections many of these ulemas were requested in help. The candidates or their organisers made special efforts to obtain their assistance. There was nothing unnatural about this. I have learnt for the first time from your letter that someone working for our candidate threatened to excommunicate Muslim voters. I do not know who did this but in any event it was highly improper for him to do so.

Many odd people unconnected with the Congress probably supported the Congress candidates. Surely this had nothing to do with a Hindu

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter of 16 January, Ismail Khan wrote: "Can the Congress have the temerity to deny that its own propaganda among the Muslim masses has been free from these blemishes? Has it (the Congress) not in the recent by-elections and in its mass contact movement utilised to the fullest extent the religious and spiritual influence of eminent theologians, and through them done its best to exploit the religious sentiments of the ignorant masses in every conceivable manner...If after this exhibition of communalism by a majority community, a minority devises effective measures for its security can you blame it, and wonder at its communalism?"

government as it had probably little to do with a great love for the Congress. But the opposite candidate was running on a definite communal ticket and it is not surprising that zamindars and others preferred a Congress candidate who stood on a wider platform. Suppose a Hindu Mahasabha candidate opposed a Congress candidate. Is it not extremely likely that Muslim zamindars and vakils, who are in no way associated with the Congress, would prefer the Congress candidate to the purely communal candidate? This is not communalism but a reaction from communalism.

You have drawn my attention previously to certain offensive epithets said to have been used against members of the Muslim League. I have no information, except what you say, about these epithets. It is possible that exaggerated or perverted reports reached your ears. In any event your complaint has been, so far as I can remember, not against Congressmen but against Ahraris and others.[3] I am glad that even in the super-heated atmosphere of the elections Congressmen were not guilty of improper behaviour. It is possible that some Ahraris erred. If so, I am sorry. They are not closely associated with the Congress and are unused to our discipline and methods.

As for the national flag, it took birth 17 years ago during the early days of the noncooperation movement.[4] Its colours and shape etc. were determined after careful consultation with leaders of all communities in the Congress. In those days Muslims were present in large numbers in the Congress and the flag was frequently used by the khilafat committee. Its colours were certainly determined to represent various communities, green being for Muslims and white for other minorities. We did try later not to lay stress on the communal reason for the colours as we wanted it to be considered the common national flag of all. Maulana Mohamed Ali delivered any number of eloquent orations on the national flag as representing the unity of India and all communities.

3. In his letter of 1 December 1937, Ismail Khan had complained: "...I wonder whether the speeches delivered by the Ahrar leaders who are today espousing the Congress cause have ever been reported to you. I also do not quite know whether you ever read vernacular papers in which they are often reproduced. If you have not done so, I cannot possibly describe here the filthy abuses of the Muslim League and its leaders in which these heroic gentlemen indulge...I am afraid that your workers purposely refrain from furnishing you with information which would not be to their credit..."

4. Ismail Khan had written: "...I am not aware that any Muslim organisation has recognised it to be the national flag. I have also understood it to be the Congress flag...I do not know whether the Hindu Mahasabha or the Christian community treat the tricolour flag as the national flag."

It is obvious that India must have a national flag, a flag which all can call their own. A communal flag cannot possibly take its place and it is hardly proper to put up any communal flag on public buildings used by people of all communities. During the past 17 years the national flag has become very popular all over India and it has been endeared to us by any number of sacrifices and even deaths to protect its honour.

You are perfectly right in saying that many Hindus, and so also many Muslims, are swayed by communal feelings. But the point is: what lead we must give, what objective we have, and what methods we pursue? If we do anything that increases communalism and separatism then we do injury both to our community and to the nation.

You are mistaken if you think that the Congress has neglected other groups or minorities in India and is concentrating on the Muslims only. You know that we have fought the Hindu Mahasabha and disabled it politically. We have done effective and successful work among the Christian masses in the south. We have approached the Sikhs, Parsis and Jews. Our policy is the same throughout. Naturally, you will agree, the Muslims have a special importance and we desire to gain their goodwill. But allow me to tell you that there has been no liberal financing of anybody. Our income is almost entirely derived from four-anna subscriptions.

There is no question of the Congress trying to break the solidarity of the Muslims or any other community. It is on the political field that we make appeal and thus want to make a common platform for all.

As for Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim, you are right in saying that he did not join the civil disobedience movement. But he has long been a member and office-bearer of a local Congress committee and a member of the Swaraj Party in the legislature. I do not know why he stood as a Muslim League candidate. One of the reasons probably was because at the time there was no apparent conflict between the Congress and the League.

I enclose copies of the correspondence I have had with Mr. Jinnah.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

66. To Sayidur Rahman[1]

Allahabad
February 10, 1938

Dear Mr. Rahman,[2]
It is two months ago when I received your letter[3] but have been so frightfully busy since then that I was unable to thank you for it. Even now I am afraid I cannot deal with all the questions that you have raised in it. Your questions really involve a consideration of the technique of revolutionary action in India. To some extent you can find an answer to them by considering both the revolutionary technique that we have developed in India through the Congress and the methods employed in other countries. You will find that in Western countries revolutionaries today seldom talk in terms of violence, although violence is not excluded from their thought. But essential revolutionary changes are sought to be brought about by mass action. This action may be of many kinds ultimately ending in civil disobedience, non-payment of taxes and other forms of noncooperation.

The Muslims, as any other group, are undoubtedly justified in acting as a group in all matters which affect them as a group. These matters are religious and cultural in the main. In political matters the lines of demarcation are not communal and therefore a communal consideration of such matters is reactionary.

I am glad that the League has adopted independence for its object. But I do not yet know how far it represents the ideology of the leaders of the League. Many of these leaders, you will recollect, have cooperated with the government in its attempts to suppress India's struggle for freedom. In any event I have sought to find out what the Muslim League desires and wherein it differs from the Congress and no one has so far given me an answer in public or in private. You will remember that controversy arose because objection was taken to the Congress working among Muslims. This was an extraordinary objection because if it is once admitted we shall also have to admit the right of the Hindu Mahasabha to prevent us from working among the Hindus. We

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-4/1937-38, pp. 13-14, N.M.M.L.
2. An advocate of Dibrugarh.
3. He had asked whether it was through mass consciousness that Jawaharlal wanted the people to be relieved of their poverty and whether the Congress and the Muslim League, having the same ideal of achievement of independence, could not reach their goal pursuing their different paths.

do not challenge the right of the Muslim League or any other organisation to work. We do claim that we have an equal right to spread our political ideology and methods of work and to appeal to people to support this ideology.

As for the *Bande Mataram* song, you will see that there is not a word in that part of it which has been accepted by the Congress, which has any reference to any religion or religious idea. The song has become exceedingly popular all over India during the last thirty years or more as a political song and the British Government has tried to suppress it as such. It has been associated with innumerable instances of sacrifice and suffering and as such it has become part of our national movement. It may in future become less important, but it would be wrong for the Congress to suppress a thing which has this background and which does not offend against any principle.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

67. To M. A. Jinnah[1]

Bombay
February 25, 1938

Dear Mr. Jinnah,
Your letter[2] of the 17th February reached me at Haripura. I had no intention of flinging any complaints and grievances at you. In my attempt to find out what your complaints were I read your speeches as reported in the newspapers (usually by a news agency) and noted down some of the points on which you had laid stress. I am glad to know that you have been misreported but you have not pointed out where the misrepresentation comes in, nor, so far as I know, have you issued any statement to the press correcting the misrepresentation. May I suggest that it will be worthwhile to correct these errors so that the

1. *Nehru-Jinnah Correspondence*, (Allahabad, 1938).
2. Jinnah wrote: "You have now flung at me more complaints and grievances of a trifling character. Evidently you rely on that section of the press which is bent on misrepresenting and vilifying me....As regards my Calcutta speech, the word 'challenge' is obviously due to the imagination of the reporter for the very context shows clearly that it was an invitation. However, the discussion of all these matters in correspondence will lead us nowhere..."

public might not be misled? A clear and authoritative statement from you will help us also in understanding what you stand for and what you object to.

I note that you do not wish me to introduce in our correspondence any matters which we may have discussed with Nawab Ismail Khan or Chowdhry Khaliquzzaman. I did not know that they represented any different viewpoint from yours. I thought it necessary to draw your attention to the repeated attempts I have been making to find out what the political and communal policy of the Muslim League is and wherein it differs from that of the Congress. You will remember saying last year that the Muslim League had an entirely different policy even on political matters from that of the Congress. Since then the League has changed its objective and its economic outlook and has thus approached nearer to the Congress. I am anxious to find out what the real meaning of these changes is. Without this clarification it is difficult for us to understand the present position.

You say that you do not believe in the doctrine that I lay down, namely: "Are we not entitled to ask you to substantiate all these criticisms in private at least, if not in public?" Further you say that for your part you make no such distinction and are prepared to substantiate anything that you have said publicly, provided it is correctly reported. If you will read my sentence again you will no doubt observe that I have nowhere laid down any such doctrine as you imagine. I would indeed welcome a public treatment by you of the criticisms made by you. But if you yourself were unwilling to write to the press on the subject, as you indicated in your letter, I put it to you that we were at least entitled to request you to substantiate the criticism in private.

If you have made no criticisms of the Congress, and the press reports are entirely wrong, then of course no question of substantiation arises. All that need be done is to contradict the press reports. But if criticisms have been made, as presumably they have been, then I would request you to justify them publicly or privately as you might choose. Personally I would prefer the former method.

I am afraid I must confess that I do not yet know what the fundamental points of dispute are. It is for this reason that I have been requesting you to clarify them. So far I have not received any help in this direction. Of course we shall willingly meet you whenever opportunity arises. Our President, Subhas Chandra Bose, or Maulana Abul Kalam Azad or I or any other member of the Working Committee can meet you at a suitable opportunity.

But when we meet what are we to discuss? Responsible people with organisations behind them can hardly discuss anything in the air. Some

clarification of the issues, some clear statement of what is wanted and what is objected to, is always desirable, otherwise we may not come to grips with the subject. You will remember the argument about what transpired at Delhi in 1935 between you and Babu Rajendra Prasad. There has even been a difference of opinion about the facts. It would be unfortunate if we repeated this performance and then argued about it later.

It is thus highly desirable for us to define the issues first. This is also necessary as we have always to consult many colleagues in regard to any matter affecting the Congress policy. There is surely nothing undesirable or inappropriate about this defining of issues by correspondence.[3] It is the usual method adopted between individuals and organisations. May I therefore beg of you to enlighten me?

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. In the same letter Jinnah also wrote: "...you want me to note down 'the points of difference' and discuss them through and by means of correspondence—a method which I made it clear in my last letter is highly undesirable and most inappropriate. I welcome your suggestion when you say 'whenever necessity arose everyone of us would willingly welcome a talk'. If you think that necessity has arisen and anyone of you is willing, I shall be glad to see you and equally welcome a talk. The thing is that you prefer talking at each other whereas I prefer talking to each other. Surely you know and you ought to know what are the fundamental points in dispute."

68. To M. A. Jinnah[1]

Allahabad
March 8, 1938

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

Thank you for your letter of March 3rd.[2] I am afraid our letters to each other repeat themselves. I go on requesting you to tell us what

1. *Nehru-Jinnah Correspondence,* (Allahabad, 1938).
2. Jinnah stated: "...You wind up your letter by insisting upon the course that I should formulate the points in dispute and submit to you for your consideration and then carry on correspondence with you. This method I have already stated in my considered opinion is undesirable and inappropriate. The method you insist upon may be appropriate between two litigants and that is followed by solicitors on behalf of their clients but national issues cannot be settled like that."

exactly are the points in dispute which have to be discussed and you go on insisting that this should not be done by correspondence. At the same time you have pointed out that the main points in dispute have been constantly, and very recently, discussed in the press and public platform. I have carefully followed press statements and your public speeches. In my effort to discover these points of dispute I enumerated some of the criticisms which you were reported to have made in public speeches. In your reply you stated that you were misreported, but you did not say what the correct report should have been. Further you said that these were minor and trifling matters, but again you did not point out what the major matters were. You will perceive my difficulty. I hope I am not making any insinuations or innuendoes, as you suggest in your last letter. Certainly it is not my intention to do so, nor to raise trifling matters which are not germane to the present subject. But what are these matters which are germane? It may be that I am dense or not sufficiently acquainted with the intricacies of the problem. If so, I deserve to be enlightened. If you will refer me to any recent statement made in the press or platform which will help me in understanding, I shall be grateful.[3]

It is not my desire, may I repeat, to carry on a controversy by correspondence, but only to find out what the main points of discussion and dispute are. It is surely usual for national issues to be formulated and clarified in this way to facilitate discussion. Both in national and international matters we are frequently adopting this course.

You are perfectly right in saying that this matter has been tackled since 1925 repeatedly.[4] Do you not think that this very history warns us not to approach it in a vague manner without clear ideas as to what we object to and what we want? Apart from this, much has happened during these past few years which has altered the position. For instance, the Communal Award. Do you want this discussed with a view to some settlement being arrived at on another basis?

3. Jinnah in reply wrote on 17 March 1938: "Perhaps you have heard of the Fourteen Points."

4. Jinnah had stated: "When you say that 'I am afraid I must confess that I do not know what the fundamental points in dispute are' I am only amazed at your ignorance. This matter has been tackled since 1925 right up to 1935 by the most prominent leaders in the country and so far no solution has been found. I would beg of you to study it and not to take up a self-complacent attitude and if you are earnest I don't think you will find much difficulty in realizing what the main points in dispute are because they have been constantly mentioned both in the press and public platform even very recently."

It is obvious that the Congress is exceedingly anxious to remove all causes of misunderstanding and friction. Apart from wider national issues, it would like to do so because such misunderstanding comes in the way of its work. It has frequently considered the problem and passed such resolutions and put forward such proposals as it considered right. I do not wish to discuss as to whether these were right or not. That may be a matter for argument. But according to our lights we tried to do our best. If we did not succeed to the extent we hoped to do that is our misfortune and we shall gladly consider suggestions which might lead to better results.[5]

What are the various aspects of this matter? May I enumerate them?

(1) The Communal Award, which includes separate electorates and reservation of seats.
(2) Religious guarantees.
(3) Cultural protection and guarantees.

Presumably these are the three main heads. There may be some minor matters but I do not refer to them as you wish to concentrate on the main issues.

As regards the Communal Award, the position of the Congress has been clarified. If it is your desire to discuss this matter, I should like to know it.

As regards religious and cultural guarantees, the Congress has given as full assurances and guarantees as is possible. If, however, any other guarantees are considered necessary, they should be mentioned. About one of the questions which you have referred to in your speeches, the language question, I have written to you previously and sent you my brochure. I trust that you agreed with its main conclusions.

Are we going to discuss these matters or some others which I have not mentioned above? Then again the background of all such discussions must necessarily be a certain political and economic one—our struggle for independence, our anti-imperialism, our methods of direct action

5. Jinnah in the same letter, inviting Jawaharlal's attention to the articles on Muslim views and demands published in *The Statesman* of 12 February 1938 and *New Times* of 1 March 1938, wrote: "...But if you desire that I should collect all these suggestions and submit to you as a petitioner for you and your colleagues to consider, I am afraid I can't do it nor can I do it for the purpose of carrying on further correspondence with regard to those various points with you. But if you still insist upon that as you seem to do so...in that case I would request you to ask the Congress officially to communicate with me to that effect and I shall place the matter before the Council of the All India Muslim League..."

whenever necessary, our anti-war policy, our attempt to remove the exploitation of the masses, agrarian and labour problems, and the like. I take it that with the re-orientation of the Muslim League's policy there will not be any great difference regarding this anti-imperialist background.

You will forgive me for repeating myself in these letters and for saying the same things over and over again. I do so because I am keenly desirous of your appreciating my viewpoint, which I believe is also the viewpoint of my colleagues in the Congress. I have no desire to take up your time and to spend my time in writing long letters. But my mind demands clarity before it can function effectively or think in terms of any action. Vagueness or an avoidance of real issues cannot lead to satisfactory results. It does seem strange to me that in spite of my repeated requests I am not told what issues have to be discussed.

I understand that Gandhiji has already written to you expressing his readiness to have a talk with you. I am not now the Congress President and thus have not the same representative capacity, but if I can be of any help in this matter my services are at the disposal of the Congress and I shall gladly meet you and discuss these matters with you.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

69. To C. Khaliquzzaman[1]

Khali
March 22, 1938

My dear Khaliq,

I have received your letter of the 15th March together with a copy of your letter to Gandhiji.[2] I do not quite agree with the account of past history that you have given, and Pantji, I understand, has also carried away different impressions. However, it is no good discussing the past.

1. C. Khaliquzzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, (Lahore, 1961), pp. 182-183. A copy of this letter is not available among Jawaharlal's papers kept in the N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter of 15 March 1938 to Mahatma Gandhi, referring to the formation of a coalition ministry in U.P., he wrote: "I would have been humiliated in my own eyes and would have been unworthy of any trust in future by any group of men, if I had yielded to the demands that were made to me..."

In your letter to Gandhiji you mention the threat and danger from "undisciplined forces within our own ranks which aim at the destruction of our social structure and spiritual background." I do not know exactly to what group you refer. Personally I should have said that the greatest danger in India is from the undisciplined forces which communal organizations let loose and which they feed and which are likely to put an end to any spiritual background that we may have in this country. During the last few months I have watched with astonishment the progressive deterioration of the communal situation and I have wondered that sensible and intelligent persons should be parties to this.

I shall of course meet Mr. Jinnah whenever he cares to meet me but it passes my comprehension what language we can talk with each other which is understood by both of us.[3]

I am not worried very much either by the end of Austria[4] or by a few communal riots. I think in bigger terms and play for higher stakes. It is quite possible that I may prove an utter failure in my attempts. If so, I shall make my exit gracefully without shouting or complaining, I hope. But I see no reason why I should give up the ideals which have moved me and driven me to action.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

3. Khaliquzzaman wrote: "I have carefully perused the correspondence between you and Mr. Jinnah and I am glad to find that in spite of some stiffness running through it the door for a talk between you and him has not been banged. ...I hope you will see it through in spite of irritation and the annoyance which you may have to suffer at times during the course of the negotiations..."
4. Germany annexed Austria in March 1938.

70. On the Communal Riots in Allahabad[1]

I do not understand how the people get so much affected, become panicky by rumours and are completely upset merely by the acts of a few *goondas* or misguided people. This is disgraceful.

1. Speech at a public meeting in Allahabad, 31 March 1938. *The Leader*, 2 April 1938.

If all the rumours that are spread at Allahabad during the period of the communal disturbances are compiled, it would give an impression that Allahabad is undergoing the same turmoil as China or Spain. But if one examines those rumours they would prove to be cent per cent false. Those responsible for the mischief might be ten, twenty or twenty five people, and I fail to understand why the whole city is shaken by a handful of people; why mere pattering of lathis by a few people leads to the suspension of the entire business in the city. There might be some instigators behind those handful of people; yet I fail to understand why the entire population should lose their balance by the acts of a few people. We talk of big problems like achievement of freedom, removal of the poverty of the people and similar things. Only those mentally strong can achieve these objectives, and if there are fifteen or twenty men of strong will in a *mohalla*, they can control the situation.

In Spain, for instance, war is going on for over a year. Bombs are thrown from the air from time to time killing not one or two people but wiping out the population of an entire street at a time. Yet people are busy in their avocations as in normal times. There is never any suspension of business on account of fear. They don't lose their heart, while here mere pattering of lathis causes suspension of the entire business. I have heard that there is so much panic here during the period of rioting that everybody wants a guard. Even people in Civil Lines, where nothing has happened, make frequent telephone calls, asking for police guards. It is very painful to see such a state of affairs. Stray assaults on innocent people are really deplorable. I have visited the Colvin hospital and there I saw an old woman among the injured. I do not understand the motive behind such cowardly acts. Surely, the assailant has not done a great religious deed by injuring that old woman.

No doubt, some happenings in Allahabad recently are responsible for stirring up communal feelings but it is not proper for the people to say that they are not responsible for the outbreak of rioting as the communal feelings have been roused. I am prepared, even on behalf of the Congress, to say that they are certainly responsible for such deplorable happenings because it is their duty to ensure that such things do not occur. Every citizen is responsible for what has happened.

I feel that the Congressmen in the city like Mr. Muzaffar Husain, president, Mrs. Purnima Banerji, and Messrs. Radhey Shyam Pathak[2] and

2. A Congressman of Allahabad; imprisoned in 1932 and 1942; secretary, Allahabad D.C.C., 1937-41; joined Congress Socialist Party and later the Praja Socialist Party; died 1973.

Sajjad Zaheer, secretaries of the city Congress committee, rose to the occasion and I congratulate them. If there were 200 or 400 people who could work like them, the riots would have been brought under control in two hours.

Hundreds of complaints relating to arson and assault have been received at the Congress office and requests were made to get them recorded at the *kotwali*. This is not our method though there may be some sitting in a secure place like *kotwali* who would like to get these reports recorded there. Other people might be doing so but the Congress should not follow that method. I do not mean to say that Congressmen should never make reports to the police but on occasions like these they cannot turn their office into a police station forgetting their own work in moments of excitement. Therefore, although sometimes even correct information is brought to us, we do not get any report recorded at a police station. That causes displeasure to some people, but I am sure that even they would appreciate the attitude of the Congress when they think over the matter coolly.

I have visited some *mohallas* today. I still noticed signs of panic in some quarters. Some people told me that a section of the people was storing grain, which shows that there is a preparation for a disturbance again. I want to put an end to such rumours and I hope that the public would not be affected by such actions. A limit of absurdity was reached when I found that a lawyer who was reported to have been killed during the riots was found arguing in a court. Do not therefore be led away by rumours. It is also not proper for anyone to leave his house in panic. It would generally be seen that during such disturbances the *mohallas* are never attacked by neighbours. Therefore, there is no point in leaving the *mohallas*. Such conduct only added to the confusion.

I do not wish to speak of bigger problems on this occasion. Behind the communal disturbances there is a political background. What could be the cause of communal riots? *Muharram* and *Holi* festivities were celebrated in the past also without untoward occurrences. The special thing this year is that there is the Congress ministry which wants to do something for the people in general. They want to tackle intricate problems intended to ameliorate the condition of the *kisans* and the masses. This is not liked by some people whose interest is to create tensions in order to distract the government's attention from the major problems.

At present, I would only request the people to realise that it is their responsibility to keep peace and order without the help of the police or the military and in spite of the *goondas*. They should try to contradict baseless rumours, allay panic, call back the people who have

left their homes and find ways and means to restore peace in their own *mohallas*.

The period of the national week from April 6 to 13 should be devoted to making efforts to allay panic and fear and to establish permanent organisations of Hindus and Muslims for maintaining peace in each *mohalla*.

71. To P. D. Tandon[1]

Camp Calcutta
April 4, 1938

Dear Tandon,[2]
Your letter. The way students and young men can help, if a serious communal situation arises, is this: a group of them should volunteer and their names should be taken down. They should be ready to come out at a moment's notice. In case there is any excitement or trouble they should gather and go to the Congress office and from there to the area affected. In these areas as well as in the central part of the city, like Chowk, small groups of five should stand at important places and crossings and patrol in the neighbourhood. Their very presence will inspire confidence in the shopkeepers and residents. Individuals should not do this work but small groups of five or six. It must be remembered that under no circumstances must these volunteers indulge in any violence.

The first thing to do is to enrol names for this purpose and to give a list to the city Congress committee.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1915); a journalist and Congressman of Allahabad; Minister of State, U.P. Government, 1971-72; wrote several books on Jawaharlal Nehru.

72. To M. A. Jinnah[1]

Calcutta
April 6, 1938

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

Your letter[2] of the 17th March reached me in the Kumaun hills where I had gone for a brief holiday. From there I have come to Calcutta. I propose to return to Allahabad today and I shall probably be there for the greater part of April. If it is convenient for you to come there we could meet. Or if it suits you better to go to Lucknow I shall try to go there.

I am glad that you have indicated in your last letter a number of points which you have in mind. The enclosures you have sent mention these and I take it that they represent your viewpoint.[3] I was somewhat surprised to see this list as I had no idea that you wanted to discuss many of these matters with us. Some of these are wholly covered by previous decisions of the Congress, some others are hardly capable of discussion.

As far as I can make out from your letter and the enclosures you have sent, you wish to discuss the following matters:

(1) The Fourteen Points formulated by the Muslim League in 1929.
(2) The Congress should withdraw all opposition to the Communal Award and should not describe it as a negation of nationalism.
(3) The share of the Muslims in the state services should be definitely fixed in the constitution by statutory enactment.
(4) Muslim personal law and culture should be guaranteed by statute.
(5) The Congress should take in hand the agitation in connection with the Shahidganj mosque and should use its moral pressure to enable the Muslims to gain possession of the mosque.
(6) The Muslims' right to call *Azan* and perform their religious ceremonies should not be fettered in any way.
(7) Muslims should have freedom to perform cow-slaughter.
(8) Muslim majorities in the provinces, where such majorities exist

1. *Nehru-Jinnah Correspondence*, (Allahabad, 1938).
2. Referring to Jawaharlal's letter of 8 March, Jinnah wrote: "I am surprised when you say in your letter under reply, 'but what are these matters which are germane?... Perhaps you have heard of the Fourteen Points."
3. The articles in *The Statesman* of 12 February and *New Times* of 1 March 1938.

at present, must not be affected by any territorial redistribution or adjustments.

(9) The *Bande Mataram* song should be given up.

(10) Muslims want Urdu to be the national language of India and they desire to have statutory guarantees that the use of Urdu shall not be curtailed or damaged.

(11) Muslim representation in local bodies should be governed by the principles underlying the Communal Award, that is, separate electorates and population strength.

(12) The tricolour flag should be changed or, alternatively, the flag of the Muslim League should be given equal importance.

(13) Recognition of the Muslim League as the one authoritative and representative organisation of Indian Muslims.

(14) Coalition ministries.

It is further stated that the formula evolved by you and Babu Rajendra Prasad in 1935 does not satisfy the Muslims now and nothing on those lines will satisfy them.

It is added that the list given above is not a complete list and that it can be augmented by the addition of further 'demands'. Not knowing these possible and unlimited additions I can say nothing about them. But I should like to deal with the various matters specifically mentioned and to indicate what the Congress attitude has been in regard to them.

But before considering them, the political and economic background of the free India we are working for has to be kept in mind, for ultimately that is the controlling factor. Some of these matters do not arise in considering an independent India or take a particular shape or have little importance. We can discuss them in terms of Indian independence or in terms of the British dominance of India continuing. The Congress naturally thinks in terms of independence, though it adjusts itself occassionally to the present transitional and temporary phases. It is thus not interested in amendments to the present constitution, but aims at its complete removal and its substitution by a constitution framed by the Indian people through a constituent assembly.

Another matter has assumed an urgent and vital significance and this is the exceedingly critical international situation and the possibility of war. This must concern India greatly and affect her struggle for freedom. This must therefore be considered the governing factor of the situation and almost everything else becomes of secondary importance, for all our efforts and petty arguments will be of little avail if the very foundation is upset. The Congress has clearly and repeatedly laid down its policy in the event of such a crisis and stated that it will be no party

to imperialist war. Peace, therefore, and Indian independence is its basic policy. The Congress will very gladly and willingly cooperate with the Muslim League and all other organisations and individuals in the furtherance of this policy.

I have carefully looked through the various matters to which you have drawn attention in your letter and its enclosures and I find that there is nothing in them which refers to or touches the economic demands of the masses or affects the all-important questions of poverty and unemployment. For all of us in India these are the vital issues and unless some solution is found for them, we function in vain. The question of state services, howsoever important and worthy of consideration it might be, affects a very small number of people. The peasantry, industrial workers, artisans and petty shopkeepers form the vast majority of the population and they are not improved in any way by any of the demands listed above. Their interests should be paramount.

Many of the 'demands' involve changes of the constitution which we are not in a position to bring about. Even if some such changes are desirable in themselves, it is not our policy to press for minor constitutional changes. We want to do away completely with the present constitution and replace it by another for a free India.

In the same way the desire for statutory guarantees involves constitutional changes which we cannot give effect to. All we can do is to state that in a future constitution for a free India we want certain guarantees to be incorporated. We have done this in regard to religious, cultural, linguistic and other rights of minorities in the Karachi resolution on fundamental rights. We would like these fundamental rights to be made a part of the constitution.

I now deal with the various matters listed above.

(1) The Fourteen Points, I had thought, were somewhat out of date. Many of their provisions have been given effect to by the Communal Award and in other ways; some others are entirely acceptable to the Congress; yet others require constitutional changes which, as I have mentioned above, are beyond our present competence. Apart from the matters covered by the Communal Award and those involving a change in the constitution, one or two matters remain which gave rise to differences of opinion and which are still likely to lead to considerable argument.

(2) The Congress has clearly stated its attitude towards the Communal Award, and it comes to this that it seeks alterations only on the basis of mutual consent of the parties concerned. I do not understand how anyone can take objection to this attitude and policy. If we are asked to describe the Award as not being anti-national, that

would be patently false. Even apart from what it gives to various groups, its whole basis and structure are anti-national and come in the way of the development of national unity. As you know it gives an overwhelming and wholly undeserving weightage to the European elements in certain parts of India. If we think in terms of an independent India we cannot possibly fit in this Award with it. It is true that under stress of circumstances we have sometimes to accept as a temporary measure something that is on the face of it anti-national. It is also true that in the matters governed by the Communal Award, we can only find a satisfactory and abiding solution by the consent and goodwill of the parties concerned. That is the Congress policy.

(3) The fixing of the Muslims' share in the state services by statutory enactment necessarily involves the fixing of the shares of other groups and communities similarly. This would mean a rigid and compartmental state structure which will impede progress and development. At the same time it is generally admitted that state appointments should be fairly and adequately distributed and no community should have cause to complain. It is far better to do this by convention and agreement. The Congress is fully alive to this issue and desires to meet the wishes of various groups in the fullest measure, so as to give to all minority communities, as stated in No. 11 of the Fourteen Points, "an adequate share in all the services of the state and in local self-governing bodies having due regard to the requirements of efficiency." The state today is becoming more and more technical and demands expert knowledge in its various departments. It is right that, if a community is backward in this technical and expert knowledge, special efforts should be made to give it this education to bring it up to a higher level.

I understand that at the Unity Conference held at Allahabad in 1933 or thereabouts, a mutually satisfactory solution of this question of state services was arrived at.[4]

(4) As regards protection of culture, the Congress has declared its willingness to embody this in the fundamental laws of the constitution. It has also declared that it does not wish to interfere in any way with the personal law of any community.

(5) I am considerably surprised at the suggestion that the Congress should take in hand the agitation in connection with the Shahidganj

4. At the conference held towards the end of 1932 it was agreed that all appointments should be made by non-party public service commissions comprising all important communities, consistent with the principle of ensuring fair representation to the various communities; and no person should be disabled by reason of community, caste, creed, race or sex.

mosque. That is a matter to be decided either legally or by mutual agreement. The Congress prefers in all such matters the way of mutual agreement and its services can always be utilised for this purpose where there is an opening for them and a desire to this effect on the part of the parties concerned. I am glad that the Premier of the Punjab has suggested that this is the only satisfactory way to a solution of the problem.

(6) The right to perform religious ceremonies should certainly be guaranteed to all communities. The Congress resolution about this is quite clear. I know nothing about the particular incident relating to a Punjab village which has been referred to. No doubt, many instances can be gathered together from various parts of India where petty interferences take place with Hindu, Muslim or Sikh ceremonies. These have to be tactfully dealt with wherever they arise. But the principle is quite clear and should be agreed to.

(7) As regards cow-slaughter, there has been a great deal of entirely false and unfounded propaganda against the Congress suggesting that the Congress was going to stop it forcibly by legislation. The Congress does not wish to undertake any legislative action in this matter to restrict the established rights of the Muslims.

(8) The question of territorial redistribution has not arisen in any way. If and when it arises it must be dealt with on the basis of mutual agreement of the parties concerned.

(9) Regarding the *Bande Mataram* song, the Working Committee issued a long statement in October last to which I would invite your attention.[5] First of all it has to be remembered that no formal national anthem has been adopted by the Congress at any time. It is true, however, that the *Bande Mataram* song has been intimately associated with Indian nationalism for more than thirty years and numerous associations of sentiment and sacrifice have gathered round it. Popular songs are not made to order, nor can they be successfully imposed. They grow out of public sentiment. During all these thirty or more years the *Bande Mataram* song was never considered as having any religious significance and was treated as a national song in praise of India. Nor, to my knowledge, was any objection taken to it except on

5. The Working Committee meeting in Calcutta from 26 October to 1 November 1937, while recognising the validity of the objection raised by Muslims to certain parts of the *Bande Mataram* song, pointed out that the evolution of the use of the song as part of national life was of infinitely greater importance than its setting in a historical novel written before the national movement had taken shape. It therefore recommended that at the national gatherings the first two stanzas only of the song should be sung.

political grounds by the government. When, however, some objections were raised, the Working Committee carefully considered the matter and ultimately decided to recommend that certain stanzas, which contained certain allegorical references, might not be used on national platforms or occasions. The two stanzas that have been recommended by the Working Committee for use as a national song have not a word or a phrase which can offend anybody from any point of view and I am surprised that anyone can object to them. They may appeal to some more than to others. Some may prefer another national song; they have full freedom to do so. But to compel large numbers of people to give up what they have long valued and grown attached to is to cause needless hurt to them and injure the national movement itself. It would be improper for a national organisation to do this.

(10) About Urdu and Hindi I have previously written to you and have also sent you my pamphlet on "The Question of Language". The Congress has declared in favour of guarantees for languages and culture. It wants to encourage all the great provincial languages of India and at the same time to make Hindustani, as written both in the Nagri and Urdu scripts, the national language. Both scripts should be officially recognised and the choice should be left to the people concerned. In fact, this policy is being pursued by the Congress ministries.

(11) The Congress has long been of opinion that joint electorates are preferable to separate electorates from the point of view of national unity and harmonious cooperation between the different communities. But joint electorates, in order to have real value, must not be imposed on unwilling groups. Hence the Congress is quite clear that their introduction should depend on their acceptance by the people concerned. This is the policy that is being pursued by the Congress ministries in regard to local bodies. Recently in a bill dealing with local bodies introduced in the Bombay Assembly separate electorates were maintained but an option was given to the people concerned to adopt a joint electorate, if they so chose. The principle seems to be in exact accordance with No. 5 of the Fourteen Points, which lays down that "representation of communal groups shall continue to be by means of separate electorates as at present, provided that it shall be open to any community, at any time to abandon its separate electorate in favour of joint electorate." It surprises me that the Muslim League group in the Bombay Assembly should have opposed the bill with its optional clause although this carried out the very policy of the Muslim League.

May I also point out that in the resolution passed by the Muslim League in 1929, at the time it adopted the Fourteen Points, it was stated that "the Mussalmans will not consent to join electorates unless

Sind is actually constituted into a separate province and reforms in fact are introduced in the N.W.F. Province and Baluchistan on the same footing as in other provinces"? Since then Sind has been separated and the N.W.F. Province has been placed on a level with other provinces. So far as Baluchistan is concerned the Congress is committed to a levelling up of this area in the same way.

(12) The national tricolour flag was adopted originally in 1920 by the Congress after full and careful consultation with eminent Muslim, Sikh and other leaders. Obviously a country and a national movement must have a national flag representing the nation and all communities in it. No communal flag can represent the nation. If we did not possess a national flag now we would have to evolve one. The present national flag had its colours originally selected in order to represent the various communities, but we did not like to lay stress on this communal aspect of the colours. Artistically I think the combination of orange, white and green has resulted in a flag which is probably the most beautiful of the national flags. For these many years our flag has been used and it has spread to the remotest village and brought hope and courage and a sense of all India unity to our masses. It has been associated with great sacrifices on the part of our people, including Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, and many have suffered lathi blows and imprisonment and even death in defending it from insult or injury. Thus a powerful sentiment has grown up in its favour. On innumerable occasions Maulana Mohamed Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali and many leaders of the Muslim League today have associated themselves with this flag and emphasised its virtues and significance as a symbol of Indian unity. It has spread outside the Congress ranks and been generally recognised as the flag of the nation. It is difficult to understand how anyone can reasonably object to it now.

Communal flags cannot obviously take its place for that can only mean a host of flags of various communities being used together and thus emphasising our disunity and separateness. Communal flags might be used for religious functions but they have no place at any national function or over any public building meant for various communities.

May I add that during the past few months, on several occasions, the national flag has been insulted by some members or volunteers of the Muslim League? This has pained us greatly but we have deliberately avoided anything in the nature of conflict in order not to add to communal bitterness. We have also issued strict orders, and they have been obeyed, that no interference should take place with the Muslim League flag, even though it might be inappropriately displayed.

(13) I do not understand what is meant by our recognition of the Muslim League as the one and only organisation of Indian Muslims. Obviously the Muslim League is an important communal organisation and we deal with it as such. But we have to deal with all organisations and individuals that come within our ken. We do not determine the measure of importance or distinction they possess. There are a large number, about a hundred thousand, of Muslims on the Congress rolls, many of whom have been our close companions, in prisons and outside, for many years and we value their comradeship highly. There are many organisations which contain Muslims and non-Muslims alike, such as trade unions, peasant unions, kisan sabhas, debt committees, zamindar associations, chambers of commerce, employers associations, etc., and we have contacts with them. There are special Muslim organisations such as the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Praja Party, the Ahrars and others, which claim attention. Inevitably, the more important the organisation the more the attention paid to it, but this importance does not come from outside recognition but from inherent strength. And the other organisations, even though they might be younger and smaller, cannot be ignored.

(14) I should like to know what is meant by coalition ministries. A ministry must have a definite political and economic programme and policy. Any other kind of ministry would be a disjointed and ineffective body, with no clear mind or direction. Given a common political and economic programme and policy, cooperation is easy. You know probably that some such cooperation was sought for and obtained by the Congress in the Frontier Province. In Bombay also repeated attempts were made on behalf of the Congress to obtain this cooperation on the basis of a common programme. The Congress has gone to the assemblies with a definite programme and in furtherance of a clear policy. It will always gladly cooperate with other groups, whether it is in a majority or a minority in an assembly, in furtherance of that programme and policy. On that basis I conceive of even coalition ministries being formed. Without that basis the Congress has no interest in a ministry or in an assembly.

I have dealt, I am afraid at exceeding length, with the various points raised in your letter and its enclosures. I am glad that I have had a glimpse into your mind through this correspondence as this enables me to understand a little better the problems that are before you and perhaps others. I agree entirely that it is the duty of every Indian to bring about harmonious joint effort of all of us for the achievement of India's freedom and the ending of the poverty of her people. For me, and I take it for most of us, the Congress has been a means to that

end and not an end in itself. It has been a high privilege for us to work through the Congress because it has drawn to itself the love of millions of our countrymen and, through their sacrifice and united effort, taken us a long way to our goal. But much remains to be done and we have all to pull together to that end.

Personally, the idea of pacts and the like does not appeal to me, though perhaps they might be necessary occasionally. What seems to me far more important is a more basic understanding of each other, bringing with it the desire and ability to cooperate together. That larger cooperation, if it is to include our millions, must necessarily be in the interests of these millions. My mind therefore is continually occupied with the problems of these unhappy masses of this country and I view all other problems in this light. I should like to view the communal problem also in this perspective for otherwise it has no great significance for me.

You seem to imagine that I wanted you to put forward suggestions as a petitioner, and then you propose that the Congress should officially communicate with you. Surely you have misunderstood me and done yourself and me an injustice. There is no question of petitioning either by you or by me, but a desire to understand each other and the problem that we have been discussing. I do not understand the significance of your wanting an official intimation from the Congress. I did not ask you for an official reply on behalf of the Muslim League. Organisations do not function in this way. It is not a question of prestige for the Congress or for any of us, for we are keener on reaching the goal we have set before us than on small matters of prestige. The Congress is a great enough organisation to ignore such petty matters, and if some of us have gained a measure of influence and popularity, we have done so in the shadow of the Congress.

You will remember that I took the intiative in writing to you and requesting you to enlighten me as to what your objections were to the Congress policy and what, according to you, were the points in dispute. I had read many of your speeches, as reported in the press, and I found to my regret that they were full of strong attacks on the Congress which, according to my way of thinking, were not justified. I wanted to remove any misunderstandings, where such existed, and to clear the air.

I have found, chiefly in the Urdu press, the most astounding falsehoods about the Congress. I refer to facts, not to opinions, and to facts within my knowledge. Two days ago, here in Calcutta, I saw a circular letter or notice issued by a secretary of the Muslim League. This contained a list of the so-called misdeeds of the U.P. Government. I read this with amazement for there was not an atom of truth in most of the charges. I suppose they were garnered from the Urdu press.

ALL INDIA CONGRESS LEGISLATORS CONVENTION, DELHI, MARCH 1937

AT VICTORIA TERMINUS, BOMBAY, 14 MAY 1937

Through the press and the platform such charges have been repeated on numerous occasions and communal passions have thus been roused and bitterness created. This has grieved me and I have sought by writing to you and to Nawab Ismail Khan to find a way of checking this deplorable deterioration of our public life, as well as a surer basis for co-operation. That problem still faces us and I hope we shall solve it.

I have mentioned earlier in this letter the critical international situation and the terrible sense of impending catastrophe that hangs over the world. My mind is obsessed with this and I want India to realise it and be ready for all consequences, good or ill, that may flow from it. In this period of world crisis, all of us, to whatever party or group we might belong and whatever our differences might be, have the primary duty of holding together to protect our people from the perils that might encompass them.

Our differences and arguments seem trivial when the future of the world and of India hangs in the balance. It is in the hope that all of us will succeed in building up this larger unity in our country that I have written to you and others repeatedly and at length.

There is one small matter I should like to mention. The report of my speech at Haripura, as given in your letter and the newspaper article, is not correct.

We have been corresponding for some time and many vague rumours float about as to what we have been saying to each other. Anxious inquiries come to me and I have no doubt that similar inquiries are addressed to you also. I think that we might take the public into our confidence now for this is a public matter in which many are interested. I suggest therefore that our correspondence might be released to the press. I presume you will have no objection.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

73. On the Exaggerated Accounts of the Riots[1]

I have refrained from saying anything about the communal situation in Allahabad, partly because I did not think it necessary to do so and partly because I was fully occupied.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 13 April 1938. *The Hindustan Times*, 14 April 1938.

I find from newspapers, however, that exaggerated and coloured accounts have been published with scare headlines and these are apt to mislead the public. There are newspapers and newspapers. Some specialise in communal propaganda and make it their business to spread hatred and prejudice, and do not hesitate to give publicity to falsehoods. Unfortunately, we have some such in Allahabad and Delhi and other places. Other newspapers are more restrained and give more or less truthful and objective accounts, but even these are sometimes led away by excited correspondents and by their desire to give striking and colourful accounts of the incidents.

The incidents that occurred on April 11 have thus been exaggerated out of all proportion. Headlines declare that there was a pitched battle in Allahabad, that the army was called out, that panic reigns, and so on and so forth. I have some knowledge of what has taken place here during the last few days, and I have walked repeatedly up and down almost every lane in Allahabad city and visited every *mohalla*, Hindu or Muslim. The so-called pitched battle consisted of exchange of brickbats in a narrow lane for about three minutes and about a dozen persons were injured.

As for the army being summoned, I was not aware of this, and I have not seen a single soldier in any part of Allahabad on Monday when there was undoubtedly some tension. Most of the shops in the centre of Allahabad city remained closed, but then some big shops opened in the Chowk itself for a while, and in other parts many shops were open and vehicular traffic continued. On Tuesday most of the shops opened.

Today normal business is being carried on in the shops and markets. Almost all the incidents that occurred took place on the morning of Monday, April 11. Since then nothing of note has happened.

As for panic, no doubt some people were panicky and perhaps some correspondents of newspapers and news agencies were of their number, but even on Monday morning conditions were far better and more cheerful than one might imagine from newspaper reports.

I personally must confess that I did not lose my appetite or sleep because of anything that had occurred.

Regrettable as these incidents are, we must not lose our balance, or our sense of perspective because of them, or exaggerate them or their consequences. Throughout these days we have been holding small *mohalla* meetings and even the authorities did not consider it necessary to prevent gatherings.

May I beg the newspapers—their editors and correspondents—not to permit any exaggeration in their columns? Something has happened;

that was unfortunate and deplorable, but that something was not so big as to upset us or worry us much.

Indeed, it is obvious that trouble-makers are few and they can be controlled and checked without much difficulty if men and women of goodwill of all communities work to this end.

74. To M.A. Jinnah[1]

Allahabad
April 16, 1938

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

Your letter of April 12th has just reached me.

I am exceedingly sorry that anything that I have written to you should have caused you pain. It seems to be true that we approach public problems from different standpoints and inevitably I try to place my viewpoint before you and seek to gain your appreciation of it. To say anything that might pain you would defeat my own purpose, even apart from its impropriety. At the same time I owe it to you and to myself to endeavour to place frankly before you how my mind works and what my views are on the subject-matter under discussion. Our viewpoints might differ, but I do believe that the margin of difference can be lessened by a frank approach on either side. I have sought to make this approach in all sincerity and with every desire on my part not to say anything that might come in the way.

In my last letter I dealt with the various points mentioned in the extracts you had sent me as I presumed that, as you had drawn my attention to them, they might to a large extent represent what you had in mind.[2] As you know, I have been trying to get at these points of

1. *Nehru-Jinnah Correspondence*, (Allahabad, 1938).
2. Jinnah wrote: "...you have formulated certain points in your letter which you father upon me to begin with as my proposals.... Those are some of the matters which are undoubtedly agitating Muslim India, but the question how to meet them ... whether constitutional changes are necessary, whether we should do it by agreement or conventions, and so forth, are matters, I thought, for discussion, but I am extremely sorry to find that you have in your letter already pronounced your judgement and given your decisions on a good many of them with a preamble which negatives any suggestion of discussion which may lead to a settlement..."

difference and when I saw something concrete I wanted to give my reaction to it. I tried to state what the Congress opinion has been in regard to them. There is no finality in day to day politics, although certain principles are supposed to govern policies. It is for the Congress, if it so chooses, to vary any policy. All I can do is to state what the past and present policy is.

I regret that you think that I write in an arrogant and militant spirit and as if I considered the Congress as the sovereign power. I am painfully conscious of the fact that the Congress is not a sovereign power and that it is limited and circumscribed in a hundred ways and further that it may have to go through the wilderness many a time again before it achieves its objective. You have referred to my obsession with the international situation and the sense of impending catastrophe that possesses me.[3] If I feel that way, as I do, I can hardly grow complacent or imagine that the Congress is sovereign. But when I discuss Congress policies, as a Congressman, I can only repeat what these are and not bring in my own particular views on the subject, if these happen to be at variance with Congress resolutions.

You point out to me that the Congress press has contained numerous falsehoods in regard to the Muslim League and some of its leaders, as well as the provincial governments of Bengal, Punjab, Sind and Assam. I entirely agree with you that falsehoods, misrepresentations and insinuations are to be deprecated and countered wherever they might occur, in the Urdu, Hindi or English press, or whatever the political complexion of the newspaper. There is no such thing as the Congress press over which the Congress has control, but it is true that many newspapers generally support the Congress. But whether we can influence them or not, we certainly want to stop all such false and misleading statements and to express our disapproval of them. In this matter I can only beg of you to point out specific instances so that we might take necessary action.

I note what you say about the publication of our correspondence. I have not got with me copies of your correspondence with Mahatma

3. Jinnah referring to this opinion of Jawaharlal had written: "It seems to me that you cannot even accurately interpret my letter... you are thinking in terms entirely divorced from realities which face us in India. I can only express my great regret at your turning and twisting what I wrote to you and putting entirely a wrong complexion upon the position I have placed before you at your request..."

Gandhi.[4] I am therefore writing to him to seek his permission as suggested by you.

I am afraid it will hardly be possible for me to visit Bombay in April or May. Early in June I intend sailing for Europe. In case I go to Bombay earlier I shall inform you so that we might have the opportunity of meeting. I understand that you will be meeting Mahatma Gandhi in the near future.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. He had replied that he would have no objection provided the correspondence between him and Mahatma Gandhi was also published simultaneously. Ultimately the entire correspondence between Jinnah and Jawaharlal from 18 January to 16 April 1938, as well as that with Mahatma Gandhi from 19 October 1937 to 20 April 1938, was released to the press by Jinnah on 15 June 1938.

75. The Real Causes of the Riots[1]

An indissoluble bond of unity exists between the workers and the peasants of the world. The struggle of the Indian workers is the struggle of the workers of the world. I have given much anxious thought to the recent communal riots and have come to the conclusion that the root cause of these riots is political and not religious. There are people who want to stop the onward march of India to its destined goal. They know that they cannot do that. But it is possible for them temporarily to deflect and divert the course of national endeavour. It is these persons who are interested in communal disorders. It is curious that these gentlemen studiously refrain from the discussion of economic problems facing the masses at their meetings. At a recent meeting of the Muslim Leaguers at Allahabad, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan of Lahore indulged in personal attacks on me. Such attacks are, of course, not going to affect me. The question is not whether I am competent or incompetent. That is a personal issue. But the Muslim speakers at that very meeting had nothing to say about the problem of hunger of the Muslim masses. That shows their real motive. These gentlemen only want to put

1. Speech on May Day, Allahabad, 1938. *The Tribune*, 3 May 1938.

obstacles in the way of the Congress governments. They want to stand for the old order. They are mortally afraid of democratic changes. No religious principle is involved in these riots but religion is being used as a smokescreen for selfish designs of some persons. I know that the Congress governments are up against heavy odds. There are old services, specially the police, which are still addicted to the old anti-democratic habits. There are serious limitations of the constitution itself. At the top of it, mischief-mongers try to excite communal passions. I have to warn you that nothing of great or permanent value can be achieved unless you clear your path of these obstacles. You should clear your minds of these futile controversies. You must not be swept off your feet by exaggerated and false accounts of the communal riots. You should keep your minds cool. The main problem of India is the problem of the workers and peasants. The Congress governments are doing their best for them. Neither I nor the Congress Working Committee is responsible for every single act of the ministers. There are several acts of the ministers with which I do not agree. The ministers have a certain freedom of action despite the control of the Congress High Command.

4

THE WORKING OF PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY

MINORITY MINISTRIES

1. On the Ban on the Kottapatam Summer School[1]

While I was in Malaya I read a brief report in the papers of the Madras Government's ban on the summer school at Kottapatam and the subsequent lathi charge on the students. Such a step would have been surprising and reprehensible even during the course of the civil disobedience movement. At the present moment it came as a shock to me. Since my return I have looked further into the matter and the sense of astonishment and shock has not lessened. This incident has illuminated, as by a flash of lightning, the real nature of the new constitution and the way the Madras ministry is functioning, for it is this ministry that is obviously responsible for the steps taken. We see that this ministry is as much a police ministry suppressing elementary rights of free speech and association as the previous government was. We see what the new Act means to the people. The same intolerable state of affairs continues and all the soft words thrown out at us cannot stop the aggressive suppression of civil liberty or the use of the lathi on the bodies of our youth. The lathi remains still under the new ministers, as it was before, the true symbol of the government.

Some other important considerations arise. The police reporters tried to force entry into the summer school. Very rightly this was objected to. We have been giving facilities to police reporters at our public meetings but this does not mean that we admit their right to attend our committee meetings and summer schools and the like. This cannot be agreed to. Summer schools for the study of political and economic problems have been held in many places in India. This is a healthy development which I trust will continue, for only by study and discussions can we understand our problems and find the way to their solution.

Another question that arises is the right of an individual or group to refuse to obey an order which it considers objectionable. It is patent that, civil disobedience having been suspended, disobedience of orders is not desirable. Where such objectionable orders are made reference

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 17 June 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 18 June 1937.

should immediately be made to superior committees for advice. But sometimes cases arise when immediate decisions have to be made and the burden of such decisions must lie on the individual or group concerned and cannot commit the organisation. I can conceive of instances of orders which are so derogatory to the dignity of the individual or of the Congress that the individual prefers to disobey them on his own responsibility. This has nothing to do with civil disobedience. It is the inherent right of an individual. This right, however, must be exercised with every care so as not to injure the larger purposes we have in view, and the individual must take the risk of being judged by the organisation.

2. On the Viceroy's Speech[1]

The recent speech[2] of Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, is pitched in a somewhat lower key than most of the previous utterances on behalf of the British Government. It is softer in tone and *prima facie* is conciliatory in approach. During the last three months there has been a marked change in these utterances. The Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, adopted a minatory and pompous attitude[3] some time back and his subordinates in India faithfully reflected that attitude. Very soon they realised that the attempt to bully the people of India would not pay; it had the reverse effect. So the tone changed and soft words took the place of harsh language. But the substance remained much the same and it is the substance that counts.

The objective and policy of the National Congress have been clearly laid down. We aim at the independence of India and a constitution that has been framed by a constituent assembly elected by adult franchise. We aim, in other words, at the capture of power by the Indian people as a whole. Only then shall we be in a position to tackle and

1. Allahabad, 24 June 1937. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. This statement does not seem to have been printed.
2. In his speech on 21 June 1937, the Viceroy appealed for cooperation and said that in regard to special responsibilities, a Governor would, at all times, be concerned to carry his ministers with him.
3. Lord Zetland, in his statement in the House of Lords on 8 April 1937, had declared that the king's government must be carried on and if the representatives of the majority party refused to accept office, it was open to the Governor to invite other persons to form a council of ministers.

solve the vast social and economic problems that face India—the appalling poverty and unemployment, the terribly low standard of living of our people. For this purpose, great changes in the social structure will be necessary and a vast planned system affecting our agriculture and industry and social services. These social and economic changes cannot take place under British imperialism. Political independence is an essential preliminary step before social problems can be successfully tackled and the burdens that crush our millions removed. Therefore we concentrate on this political issue, but we have in mind always that the real problem is how to end poverty and unemployment.

Meanwhile a reactionary constitution has been imposed upon us by British imperialism, meant to protect and perpetuate all the tremendous vested interests—British and Indian, imperialist and feudal—that exploit and impoverish our people. We have rejected that constitution utterly and we want to put an end to it and all our policy is directed to that end. We cannot and will not cooperate in accepting and working that constitution. It was on this basis that we went to the electorate and were supported by them in an overwhelming measure. This fact must be remembered for it is the basic fact of the situation, and superficial changes in our tactics must not delude anyone into imagining that we are giving up by an iota our policy of fighting and ending the new constitution. That constitution will have to go and imperialism will have to go from India.

The Viceroy has spoken softly but the meaning of his utterance is hard as British imperialism is hard. More revealing still are the activities of the government. We are told by the Prime Minister that we have already got provincial autonomy. This provincial autonomy is a strange and ugly beast which functions just as British imperialism has functioned in India. Indeed, it is the same thing in a slightly different garb. Puppet ministers have been appointed who do not have the support of even fifteen or twenty per cent of the legislature; in some cases ministers are not even members of the legislature, having been defeated in the elections. And for fear of being kicked out by an overwhelming majority of that legislature, the legislature is not summoned. In Europe this is called the fascist way of doing things; in India the British Government calls it democracy.

These puppet ministers, with the Governor at their back and the high officials of the civil service to put courage into them, are carrying on the old tradition of repression and suppressing civil liberties. Within the last few weeks some remarkable instances of "democracy" and "provincial autonomy" have occurred in India under the new dispensation. In Madras province a summer school of socialistically-inclined young

men and women, carrying on its work peacefully and quietly inside a house, was declared illegal by the government of the puppet ministers and, soon after, the police came and indulged in lathi play, breaking many heads and injuring many people and then arresting the lot. A bunch of them has now been awarded six months' imprisonment.

Newspapers are being penalised and their securities forfeited for criticising the ministers. Leading Congressmen are externed or interned from particular places. Arrests for speeches are frequent, sometimes for speeches delivered two years ago or during the last election. In the United Provinces, a planned campaign to prevent Congress work has recently come to light. It appears that early in May a secret meeting was held at which the puppet ministers and high officials of the civil service were present. At this meeting it was decided to proceed on an extensive scale against leading Congressmen chiefly under the security sections of the Criminal Procedure Code—sections 107, 108, 109. Some of these are meant for bad characters and habitual criminals. Already more than a score of such cases are pending all over the province and fresh arrests are being made. The U.P. Provincial Congress Committee, at a recent meeting, drew attention to this planned campaign of repression as a flagrant example of the working of what is called provincial autonomy. It has directed all Congressmen, against whom such proceedings are taken, to refuse to give security for so-called good behaviour, which means an abstention from political activity, and to prefer going to prison. A large number of organisations continue to be banned under the existing law.

Strikes are frequent. There was an extensive jute strike near Calcutta two months ago in which two hundred and twenty thousand workers were involved.[4] The police and the military were used against them and firing took place. The strike was ultimately called off on certain assurances from the ministers. Those assurances have so far not been fulfilled.

A great strike of railway workers on the Bengal Nagpur Railway took place some time back.[5] It was well organised and entirely peaceful and all the efforts of the officials of the railway and the government to break it failed. Thereupon promises were made on behalf of the government conceding certain demands and the strike was called off. The

4. The Calcutta jute mill workers went on strike in February 1937 for securing their elementary right to form a union and for the redress of their legitimate grievances.

5. There was a strike in the Bengal Nagpur Railway from 13 December 1936 to 10 February 1937 due to the demotion of a number of workers.

subsequent steps taken by the government have been such as to make the railwaymen feel that they have been betrayed and there is at present strong resentment among them.

In Dhubri in Assam, in a match factory owned by the Swedish Match Trust, a strike has been in progress for the last six months and in spite of extreme hardship and starvation the workers are still carrying on.[6]

In the rural areas the condition of the peasantry is appalling. In recent years over a hundred large factories for manufacturing sugar grew up in the United Provinces and Bihar and vast tracts were given over to sugarcane cultivation. The peasant, despairing of wheat cultivation owing to the fall in agricultural prices, turned to sugarcane. For a short period he did just slightly better by this change-over, while the factory owners made large profits. There was over-production and the price of sugarcane fell. Lately the government has imposed an excise duty on sugar by certification and this has been passed on almost completely to the sugarcane grower. The condition of the peasantry in these areas is piteous in the extreme and there is great ferment among them.

This is the background of the Viceregal utterance. This is the reality in India and those who claim to think and act in terms of reality must face this. An Act and a constitution which protect and safeguard imperialism and all other vested interests must petrify this misery of India's millions. Therefore we will have none of them and that remains our fundamental policy.

Soft words and gestures do not solve hard problems or fill empty stomachs.

6. See *post*, item 5.

3. To the Chief Commissioner, Delhi[1]

Allahabad
October 1, 1937

Dear Sir,
I am informed that some time ago a notification was issued by the Delhi Government declaring forfeit any copy of the independence pledge

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-9/1937, p. 175, N.M.M.L.

of 1930 of the Indian National Congress. This pledge has been and is widely in use in the whole of India and I am not aware of any other government taking such action against it now. In seven provinces of India the provincial governments are themselves committed to that pledge and have accepted office on the basis of it. It seems rather anomalous therefore that in the province of Delhi the same thing should be considered an offence which is not only permitted elsewhere in India but is actively encouraged by various provincial governments. I would therefore request you to consider the withdrawal of the notification in question.

This independence pledge appears in various books which give a historical record of recent political events in India. I do not know how far these books also come within the ban, but I am informed that some of these books have also been seized by the police. This suppression of historical and current literature seems to be extraordinary. History, if it is to teach anything, must deal with the facts as they are and not with distorted versions of it. As some of our official Congress publications give this independence pledge, I shall be grateful to you if you will let me know what your present policy is in regard to them.

Yours faithfully,
Jawaharlal Nehru

NON-CONGRESS MINISTRIES

4. The Repression in Chittagong[1]

I had heard the call of Chittagong and felt drawn towards it in many ways. Of course, the voice of Chittagong was silenced in a way, but it had been heard loudly.[2] The whole of India had shuddered at what had happened at Chittagong and in Bengal.

The indignities hurled at men and women of Chittagong were the indignities hurled at men and women of India. Though Chittagong was silenced, her silence sent a louder message all over India and also outside the great land of ours.

I have been very much impressed by the display of patience by the people of Chittagong who have been living with a ticket-like identity card which is an intolerable degradation for youth. I however want the people to put up a brave fight for the freedom of the country and put an end to such intolerable conditions.

Whenever any government takes recourse to such extraordinary measures, it betrays its own incompetence.

The fundamental problems of the country today are the hunger, poverty and unemployment of the masses. The more serious they grow, the harder would be the political struggle for freedom. When big problems arise, they make the existence of a government impossible if it fails to solve them.

The national crisis is like an earthquake and it shakes both the timid and the brave. A few more seats in the legislatures or a few more jobs under the government do not count as strength. I therefore urge upon you not to indulge in communal bickerings.

The appalling poverty and unemployment are the only problems of India as every Hindu and Mussalman suffers from them. Keeping in view these big problems, how absurd and ridiculous the communal bickerings really appear! How do such absurdities help millions of

1. Speech at Chittagong, 13 June 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 16 June 1937.
2. Since the armoury raid of 1930 the Bengal Government had been pursuing a policy of repression in Chittagong.

peasantry in Bengal and the United Provinces? So, I would urge upon all to shape our policy from the point of view of the masses.

The Congress makes no distinction between the followers of different religions. It works on democratic lines. I would like all those who want the Congress to work for the masses, to join it and work for their amelioration.

Terrorism impedes national progress. It is not a peaceful mass organisation, for the masses cannot be organised by secret means.

If we look at the world around us, we shall see that imperialism, like fascism, operates as an engine of exploitation. The Congress is fighting both the form and the system by which it operates because it is really crushing us under its weight. The Congress is however dealing with imperialism not as a racial question.

The present constitutional deadlock in the country is nothing but a reflex of the real nature of British imperialism. It can be solved only by the ultimate triumph of Indian nationalism.

The great ovation that I received in Burma and Malaya[3] was a homage paid by the Indians of Burma and Malaya to the great national organisation fighting for the freedom of this country.

In the end, I wish to thank all organisations which presented me the addresses, though I regret my inability to reply to each one of them separately.

3. Jawaharlal visited Burma and Malaya in May-June 1937. See *post*, section 12.

5. On Strikes in Bengal and Assam[1]

It may be recalled that two months ago the jute industry in Bengal was convulsed by a gigantic strike of jute workers. This strike developed till it involved more than 2,00,000 men and the Government of Bengal tried in various ways to suppress the strikers. There was firing and orders were issued under the Criminal Procedure Code to prevent entry of labour leaders in the strike areas. Still the strike grew and for many weeks the workers carried on in spite of much suffering. There was great public sympathy for the strikers for their demands were reasonable and it was notorious that their working and living conditions were

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 1 July 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 2 July 1937.

thoroughly bad, while enormous dividends had been paid by the industry in the past. Ultimately in May last the strike was called off on the assurance of the Bengal ministry that relief would be given. I understand that nothing has been done so far to give relief and sufferings of the workers continue. There is continuous ferment among them and it is right that the public should support them now as before and insist on the promises made to them being kept. Hundreds of thousands of poor workers are involved. We may not ignore their appeal for help.

There is another strike to which I would like to call public attention. This is in the Dhubri Match Factory in Assam. Many will remember the strike last year at the Ambernath Match Factory near Bombay and the heroic struggle of workers there.[2] Both these factories belong to the great Swedish Match Trust and it is scandalous that our workers should be crushed by these foreign trusts which are supported in this action by the government. The Dhubri strike arose out of a lock-out and it began as early as December 1936.

A remarkable feature of this strike is the action taken by the government officials. They have issued orders under section 17, Act V of 1861, and appointed many strikers as special constables who have to work as such without pay and against their will. Legality of this action is doubtful, but whether it is legal or not it is a monstrous procedure to attempt to crush the strike in this way. The strike concerns only 350 workers, but in its way it is a typical one in which the respective roles of the workers, a foreign trust and the government are clearly brought out.

The prolonged nature of the strike has brought much suffering to the workers and I trust that they will receive every sympathy and support from the public and from the Congressmen in particular.

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 612.

6. On the Non-release of Political Prisoners in the Punjab[1]

I welcome the proposal to have a widespread agitation for the release of political prisoners in the Punjab. While such prisoners are being released in many other provinces, the Punjab, under its reactionary

1. Message to the Punjab Political Prisoners Release Committee, Allahabad, 20 July 1937. *The Tribune*, 25 July 1937.

ministry,[2] lags behind. I hope that full public pressure will be brought to bear on the Punjab Government to do something which should be the first step of any government which claims to represent the people. If it does not do so it is clear that it is the old government continuing with a slightly different garb.

In particular, it seems to me most objectionable that Sardar Teja Singh Swatantra, duly elected member of the Punjab legislature, should be detained in prison. This is an insult to his constituency and to the people of the Punjab. If one elected member can be so detained there is no reason why every elected member with whom the government does not agree should not also be detained in prison. This is the essence of fascism and the Punjab Government in this matter is acting in a true fascist spirit.

I trust therefore that there will be a sustained and vigorous agitation in the Punjab for the release of Sardar Teja Singh as well as other political prisoners.

2. In the elections of 1937 to the Punjab Assembly, the Unionist Party under Sikandar Hayat Khan won 96 out of 175 seats and formed, in February 1937, a ministry.

7. To Mohammad Yamin Dar[1]

Allahabad
30.8.1937

Dear Friend,[2]

I regret the delay in answering your letter. Ordinarily it is not desirable for Congressmen to interview the ministers in the provinces like the Punjab where anti-Congress ministries are functioning. If, however, a minister sends for a Congressman in connection with some Congress activity or speech there is no harm in his going to the minister for this purpose. Congressmen are not expected to give undertakings of any kind for future behaviour. At the same time Congressmen must remember that in their acts and speeches they should avoid anything that

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-76/1937, p. 425, N.M.M.L.
2. A Congressman of Ludhiana.

savours of falseness, violence or vulgarity. They can and should criticise the British Government as a system and the present Punjab ministry as a kind of off-shoot of that government, but criticism of individuals should be avoided. We must deal with principles and not with personalities.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

8. To the Secretary, Bengal P.C.C.[1]

Allahabad
2.9.37

Dear Comrade,
It is proposed to hold a conference on civil liberties in India in London on October 17th. This will be an important function and it is desirable that we should take full advantage of it by supplying full facts and figures. Bengal, at the present moment, is suffering most from deprivation of civil liberties. Therefore it is desirable that the fullest particulars about Bengal should be sent for the conference. May I request you to send a complete note on this subject in regard to detenus, Andaman prisoners and all other forms of suppression of civil liberties in Bengal? This should be sent to the secretary, Indian Civil Liberties Union, Bombay Mutual Building, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Road, Bombay, who will forward them to London. Kindly send this information at an early date.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Maharashtra Government records, Police Commissioner's Office File No. 3590/H/II.

9. To Lala Hansraj[1]

Allahabad
28.9.1937

My dear Lalaji,

I have just received a copy of your letter sent to Gandhiji about the unity conference.[2] I had already seen some of the statements issued in regard to it. The position is a difficult one and it is doubtful if our association with the conference is good for us or not. This association having started, it becomes a little difficult for us to break it without obvious and sufficient cause. On the one hand we do not want to cooperate in any way with the present Punjab Government and the less our people have to do with the ministers the better; on the other hand we cannot keep away from any real effort at a solution of the communal problem. I suppose that Sikandar Hayat's principal reason for pushing this on is to gain credit for his ministry. We can hardly cooperate with him in this desire. The Punjab Government has been acting in such a manner in political field as to make Congressmen disgusted with it and I think we might well adopt a general attitude of noncooperation. I think our attitude in regard to the unity conference should be influenced by the repression of the government. There has been far too little protest against this continuing repression. If anything fresh occurs we may well have to revise our attitude to the unity conference. I am going to attend the political conference in Hoshiarpur district on the 11th October and I hope to confer with you and others there.

In your letter to Gandhiji you refer to Dr. Satyapal having written to me about the unity conference. I do not think your information is quite correct. He did write to me on the subject and generally asked for my views. I do not think that it can be said that he ignored any particular direction of mine except that there seems to be a habit in the Punjab to rush to the press. I have requested Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Gopichand and others not to make any statements in the press criticising each other. If they have any grievance they should discuss it among themselves and later, if necessary, refer it to us.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-17/1937, pp. 357-358, N.M.M.L.
2. The unity conference was sponsored by Sikandar Hayat Khan.

10. Message to the Indian Civil Liberties Conference[1]

I send my greetings to this conference which is being held in far London to consider the plight of the people of India. Everyone knows that for many years past civil and personal liberties have been crushed in India, but many people imagine that with the coming of the new constitution a new era has dawned in India and civil liberties flourish here now. It is necessary therefore to realise what the present state of affairs in India is.

The new constitution came to us not only unwanted and unasked for, but fiercely objected to by the people of India. We saw in it no marked advance to freedom, but an attempt to hold us in check and bind us down to British imperialism and its satellites in India. What was called provincial autonomy was bad enough, but far worse was the proposed federation. The Congress won overwhelmingly in the elections and, after prolonged debate, we decided to accept office and form ministries in a number of provinces. We did so in order to strengthen ourselves to fight the new constitution and, in particular, to resist the federal part of it. Before we accepted office we made it clear that we could not put up with the interference of Governors in regard to the so-called safeguards. Although no clear and definite assurances were given to us in this behalf, the controversy on this issue and the reluctance of the Congress to accept office under these limitations, have made it difficult for the Governors to exercise all the powers that the Act gives them. They realise that to do so would be to invite conflict which will result in the suspension of the constitution. Thus the Congress ministries have had a freer hand than they might otherwise have had. But it must be remembered that the safeguards and special powers are there and they hinder the work of the Congress ministries in numerous ways. This hindrance is very real though it has not so far taken the shape of open conflict.

The acceptance of ministerial office by Congressmen in six provinces, and later in one more province, brought about a rapid and marked change in all these provinces.[2] The change was especially noticeable

1. Allahabad, 4 October 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 17 October 1937.
2. In July 1937, Congress ministries were formed in the six provinces. Later, in September 1937, the Congress formed a ministry in the North West Frontier Province.

in regard to civil liberties. The bans imposed by the government on hundreds of organisations were removed, a large number of political prisoners were released, securities taken from newspapers were returned, the continuous shadowing of and spying on the people engaged in public work became less obvious. Public meetings and demonstrations were not interfered with. It seemed as if a heavy burden had been taken away, and people in towns and villages alike breathed more freely. They felt to some extent as if they had woken up from a nightmare. The change was marked and could be observed and felt everywhere in these seven provinces. And yet it was far from complete and numerous hindrances on the ordinary rights of citizenship remained. The new provincial governments could not go as far as they wanted to because of the difficulties raised by the Governors and the Governor General, as well as by the permanent services, which had been bred up in the old tradition. Red tape and numerous references to various authorities delayed progress. On either side there was a desire to avoid conflicts if they could be avoided.

In the past, encroachments on civil liberties had been of various kinds. Those due to the provincial governments could be largely removed by the new Congress governments in the provinces. But the provincial ministries were powerless in the face of the central government's encroachments. These continue in full measure, as well as many others which, though provincial, were intimately connected with the central government's policy. This applies to the banning of the Communist Party and all other organisations and trade unions which were supposed to have a red colour. It applies to books which are banned or refused entry under the Sea Customs Act. This banning and stoppage of books has been the public scandal in India. The scandal continues. The censoring of correspondence seems to continue still in the same old way even in the provinces where Congress ministries are functioning. There have even been instances of the correspondence of a provincial Prime Minister being watched and censored. A question was recently asked in the Central Assembly at Simla about the censoring of ministers' correspondence.[3] No answer was given.

It will thus be seen that even in the provinces where Congress ministries are functioning much remains to be done. But it is true that a great step forward has been taken in these seven provinces in so far as civil liberties are concerned. The difference between these provinces and the rest of India is already tremendous. In Bengal and in the Punjab,

3. To a question in the Central Assembly on 27 September 1937, the government stated that it was not in the public interest to give a reply.

the two principal non-Congress provinces at present, all the old suppressions and restrictions continue. While political prisoners are being released in the U.P., Bihar, Bombay, Madras, Central Provinces, Orissa, and the Frontier, in the Punjab and Bengal fresh arrests and convictions are taking place. Organisations are banned and the press is terrorised and suppressed by the demand of heavy securities and, in Bengal, by a strict censorship. Punjab is in many ways politically the most backward major province of India and its present government does not differ in the least from its predecessor. British imperialism finds more pliant tools there than elsewhere.

But Bengal, as in the past, so today, keeps the lead in repression and suppression of civil liberties. Even now hundreds of organisations are banned there, especially in the districts of Midnapore and Chittagong. It takes one's breath away to learn that in Chittagong district alone about 23,000 persons (official figure) are interned or restricted in their activities by government orders. Large numbers of detenus are still there in Bengal, untried and unconvicted, but kept in concentration camps for years. The full weight of the British raj continues to be felt by the unhappy people of this province.

Outside what is called British India, there lie the Indian states where even to talk of civil liberty is a joke. Two of the most advanced states are supposed to be Travancore and Mysore. In the former the Congress is still illegal and not even Congress members can be enrolled. And yet adjoining it is the province of Madras which is supposed to be governed by a Congress ministry and legislature. In Mysore innumerable restraint orders have been passed in recent months to prevent the mildest type of Congress activity.[4] The state of Hyderabad, the largest in India, still rejoices in a feudal regime, and the very idea of holding a public meeting, even for religious or social purposes, is foreign to its traditions and practices. If the great states function in this way, what of the innumerable small ones?

India, it is not always remembered, still comprises small patches of territory ruled by France and Portugal. Chandernagore and Pondicherry have not yet profited much by the *front populaire* government of France, and are backward areas where civil liberties are suppressed. In Goa, Portuguese fascism flourishes unchecked.

Far from India live numerous Indian exiles, many of whom have not seen their homeland for a quarter of a century or more. Yet they are not permitted to return home because of what they are said to have done long years ago.

4. In July 1937 many Congressmen were prohibited from making speeches.

This is the state of India and the Indian people now under the new constitution, and across our north west frontier squadrons of aeroplanes fly past to bomb and kill our neighbours and cousins.[5] It is well therefore that lovers of freedom and civil liberty in England should think of us and, in spite of the terrible problems that confront the world today, endeavour to help us in removing these innumerable restrictions on our liberties. That is an essential pre-requisite of all progress, and our problem is after all a part of the great world problem which faces us all over the world.

5. See *post*, section 6.

11. To Gopichand Bhargava[1]

Allahabad
5.10.1937

My dear Dr. Gopichand,

I am greatly distressed at the continuous and intensive repression that is going on in the Punjab. I do not see how we can offer any cooperation whatever to a government which is carrying on in this way. I do not want to come to any decision before examining all the facts and consulting our colleagues in the Punjab. I am reaching Garhdiwala for the conference[2] on the 11th morning. I hope I shall meet you there. On the 13th I shall be in Lahore.

I was surprised to see a statement issued by Chaman Lal the other day in fulsome congratulation of Sikandar Hayat.[3] There was not a mention in this of the repression going on. The Congress cannot act in this way.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-17/1937, p. 267, N.M.M.L.
2. See the succeeding item.
3. Dewan Chaman Lal congratulated Sikandar Hayat Khan for adopting a helpful attitude in regard to the proposed unity conference and hoped that Satyapal, the president of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, would join it.

12. On the Unionist Ministry in the Punjab[1]

I wish the volunteers will learn how to manage the crowds instead of creating noise themselves. Nobody among the audience should try to speak for maintaining order.

I have read the statement[2] of the Punjab Premier asking me to persuade the Punjab Congressmen to desist from making violent speeches. The advice given by him seems to be extraordinary, judging by his present attitude and actions in arresting the Congress workers and proscribing books and papers. The present government in the Punjab which has adopted a policy of repression is as reactionary as was the government which functioned here before April this year. It is impossible for me to conceive that any government which pays its ministers such fat salaries, the money for which comes from the pockets of the poor, can ever claim to be a friend of the poor peasantry.

It is all tall talk that the Unionist Government in the Punjab wants to serve the masses. How can such a government, whose only occupation is to glorify the British rule, help the poor in solving their problems of poverty, hunger and unemployment? Holding of a Viceregal durbar is just but a part of their occupation. Nobody can expect them to give up their occupation.

I am sorry to say that the Punjab Premier had been led to believe the reports of the C.I.D. when he gave orders for the prosecution of the Congressmen in this province. I refuse to believe that any Congressman would preach violence. It is by observing nonviolence in word and deed that the Congress has taken rapid strides and developed into a living force. Our strength lies in our organisation which has spread throughout the country from the Frontier down to Ceylon. I am always prepared to take good advice from anybody, be he my friend or an enemy, and I am always willing to make the best use of that advice. But in view of the methods that Sir Sikandar Hayat has adopted, it becomes impossible for anyone to give any weight to his opinion or desires. How can anyone respect his opinion in such circumstances?

1. Speech at the Punjab Political Conference, Garhdiwala, 11 October 1937. From *The Tribune*, 12 October 1937.
2. Issued on 2 October 1937.

Whenever I see such big crowds, I feel encouraged because I can at once visualise what great potentialities they possess for doing good to the country. At the same time, I also feel distressed on becoming conscious of their helplessness. I feel tormented by the thought that such fine human material cannot be used for the right purposes. I know that when people turn up in such large numbers at these gatherings, they do so not merely to see my face. They feel urged to do so because they are hopeful that some solution of their problems will be found by the Congress whose representative I am. However, that solution can be found not by simply passing a few resolutions, but by creating a right type of force. What we need to do most urgently is to bring about a change in the mentality of the people. I must say that the people here, during the recent elections, have shown how unmindful they have been of their true interests. By being lethargic and divided among themselves, they have not paid enough attention towards the strengthening of the Congress organisation in the province. I appeal to the Congressmen in the Punjab to remove your differences and always submit to a majority decision, establish a network of Congress committees, fight every election and take a broom and clear your adversaries in your province.

Things have changed in the seven provinces where Congress ministries are functioning and the people living there are feeling some sort of relief. There is an upsurge of new energy in them. It is a matter of surprise that things have remained very much the same in the Punjab. The people living in this province should not believe that Swaraj has been won in the provinces where the Congress has secured a majority. Nothing of that sort has happened because the real power, that is the power of possessing and spending money, has remained where it was before. Still, it must be said that a new wave of enthusiasm and energy has swept the Congress provinces, and the people living there have shaken their fears off.

In the U.P. we have decided to create a new force by reorganising ourselves because we believe that sooner or later we shall succeed in wresting the full powers from the hands of the present government.

If one looks at the situation in the Punjab, one finds that repression is in full swing here. In the other provinces, the atmosphere has very much changed for the better. While other provinces are releasing the prisoners and lifting all other curbs on the sale and circulation of books and newspapers, in this province more and more restrictions are being imposed and proscription orders passed and securities demanded.

It will serve no useful purpose if you merely passed a resolution condemning the harsh nature of the regime imposed on the people of this

province by the Unionist ministry. What is desired is that the people of the Punjab must resolve to remove the ministry whose members have launched a tirade against the Congress. The ministry under whose regime the chairman of the reception committee of this conference has been arrested must be made to go.[3] I must however put the blame on the people of this province for the present state of affairs as it is they who have voted in favour of the Unionist candidates. Of course, the Congress organisation of this province cannot also escape being blamed. They did not put up sufficient number of candidates to fight the elections. I am surprised that the Congress in the Punjab did not contest the bye-elections to the provincial assembly. The need of the hour is that we acquire more strength. This fact is however not being grasped by the Congressmen in the Punjab.

In such vast gatherings a slogan like "uncrowned king Jawaharlal Zindabad" is commonly heard. I hate being associated with the word 'king', be he crowned or uncrowned, because the very system of kingship is intrinsically wrong and it repels me. The country can make real progress only when there is a widespread awakening among the masses. A few leaders, however good and capable they may be, cannot do much.

The chosen few—these rajas and nawabs—have now bossed over us for long and they should now be removed or kept in some safe cupboards. I am happy to see that in the Punjab the number of primary members enrolled by the Congress organisation is larger than the quota fixed for this province. I, however, wish that you should have a network of Congress committees, and the number of primary members in this province should also be more.

I want to make an appeal to the Congressmen in the Punjab to sink their differences and work in closest harmony. I also have differences with my colleagues in the Working Committee on several crucial matters; still, I always abide by the decision of the majority after giving my most thoughtful consideration to all such matters. I hope the people of this province will develop a militant spirit and learn to work with discipline and in a spirit of cooperation with each other.

3. Balwant Singh 'Dukhia' was arrested on 12 September 1937 for a speech delivered on the Andaman Day.

13. To the Editor, The Tribune[1]

In train
17/10/37

Sir,

As I was wandering about the Frontier Province, I read hurriedly a report of a speech of mine in *The Tribune* and your criticism[2] of it in the issue of October 14th. In this and other reports many errors have crept in. Perhaps that is inevitable when long speeches in Hindustani are rendered briefly in English. It is a weariness of the flesh to have to correct all these but one or two points which have misled you deserve notice.

I am reported to have said that this Unionist Government in the Punjab was in one respect worse than the previous government as the latter did not at least carry on an open campaign of propaganda against the Congress as the Unionist Government did. While I hold that the Unionist Government is in one respect worse even than the previous government, I never made the other remark attributed to me. It would be manifestly untrue and absurd to say that the previous government did not carry on open propaganda against the Congress. Everyone knows that both in word and deed not only the previous Punjab Government but all provincial governments as well as the central government did carry on a fierce propaganda against the Congress. Indeed, they did much more than propaganda.

What I said in my speech was that the present Punjab Government was functioning in the same reactionary imperialist way as its predecessor, with this difference that the latter was frankly and openly an organ of British imperialism while the former had a different cloak which hid its real nature. This made the position somewhat worse as some people might be misled by this cloak and might ignore the real thing behind it, which is British imperialism.

I think that definitely the present Punjab Government is the most reactionary of all the provincial governments in India. It is pursuing this reactionary policy both in the political and the economic spheres, and its aggressive policy of repression and suppression of civil liberty has

1. *The Tribune*, 19 October 1937.
2. *The Tribune* was critical of certain remarks in Jawaharlal's address to the Punjab Political Conference on 11 October 1937 and felt that as long as the Congress was unable to secure the allegiance of the Muslim community, Congressmen could not hope to dislodge the Unionists who were mainly dependent on the Muslim communal vote.

given it an unenviable prominence in India. For anyone to ask for the cooperation of the progressive elements in this policy or with this government displays an extraordinary ignorance of principles and of democratic public life.

I might add that I am not at all against criticism of the Congress by the opponents of the Congress or even by its friends. I believe in the fullest criticism and discussion of public issues. But the leaders of the Unionist Party have indulged often in abuse of the Congress and its leaders, a practice which is not usually looked upon with favour by responsible public men.

Another point that you have discussed has been my regret at the fact that more Congress candidates were not put up at the time of the general election. I fully realise the difficulties of the Congress organisation in the Punjab but I am quite sure that the real strength of the Congress in the Punjab is not reflected in the present provincial assembly. My tours in the Punjab have given me an opportunity to judge of the views and temper of the people, and I am convinced that the mass of the people here, as elsewhere, stand by the Congress. If another general election was held and Congress candidates were put up for every seat, is there any doubt that the Congress would meet with signal success?

Yours &c.,
Jawaharlal Nehru

14. To Saroj Kumar Ghose[1]

Allahabad
20.10.1937

Dear Sir,[2]

I am in receipt of the representation which you and a number of others have sent.[3] I regret the delay in acknowledging it owing to my absence from Allahabad. I am grieved to learn of the incidents to which you

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-5/1937, p. 179, N.M.M.L.
2. A resident of Nator in Rajshahi district, now in Bangladesh.
3. The representation referred to the disabilities suffered by the Hindu minority in north and east Bengal. It also stressed that the Congress should be strengthened in Bengal to protect the Hindu minority as they would not like to enter into any dishonourable pact with the Muslims out of a sense of fear.

have referred. But you are entirely mistaken in thinking that the Congress in Bengal or elsewhere ignores the claims of any group. There is no question of our entering into dishonourable pacts with anybody. As you say, the only way out of this difficulty is for the Congress to have a mass basis, both Hindus and Muslims joining it in large numbers and paying attention to their economic demands. Thus only can we conquer the spirit of communalism. We are fully aware that the present government in Bengal is acting in a communal way. As you know, we are not responsible for that government's actions. The way to meet this however is not in a communal spirit but on broad national lines and with the strength of the masses behind our demands. You can rest assured that the situation in Bengal is receiving the most earnest consideration of the Congress.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

15. To Mohamed Yakub[1]

Allahabad
20.10.1937

Dear Comrade,[2]
I have received a representation from you and from others regarding the attitude taken by the Congress Party in the assembly on the Bengal Tenancy Bill. I have gone somewhat deeply into this matter and I find that there is a great deal of misapprehension. The Bengal Congress Party right through the debates tried to go much further than the government bill. If the Congress amendments had been accepted the bill would have been a real boon to the tenants.[3] Most of these amendments were rejected by the votes of the ministerialist party. As a protest against this the Congress members decided not to take part in the division on the third reading. This was because the bill did not go far enough in favour of the tenants. You will thus see that the propaganda that is carried on against the Congress Party is wholly misguided.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-5/1937, p. 199, N.M.M.L.
2. A Congressman of Comilla, now in Bangladesh.
3. The amendments to the Bengal Tenancy Bill related to the suspension of the enhancement of rent and the rate of interest payable to the landlords by the tenants. These amendments were lost.

You refer to the Congress Nationalist group in your letter. May I point out that much has happened in Bengal and in India during the last two years and, some individuals apart, this group has ceased to exist? Many members of the group itself have been acting quite differently and therefore you should not carry a bias against them. You should judge them on the merits of a particular case and not by anything that may have happened in the past.

Congress policy in regard to the tenants has been clarly laid down in the Faizpur Congress resolutions.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

16. The Agitation for the Release of the Detenus[1]

Ever since I heard that a meeting regarding the detenus and political prisoners was going to be held I have been thinking what I should say in my address. I have consulted my colleagues about that and what they were going to say in the meeting. I ordinarily feel no great difficulty in addressing meetings at great length, but on the present occasion I am experiencing a certain amount of difficulty. It would have been easy for me to come here and to condemn this government or that government, the Government of India and the Bengal Government for their policy of oppression, repression and suppression and demand in strong language that this sort of thing should be put an end to. We have done that often enough and we shall do that often enough in future. It is an easy thing to condemn people, it is an easy thing to protest against their action. But what we are after is to do something for the release of political prisoners and detenus. In spite of our tall talk about the strength of the Congress, how weak we are that we have not been able to do what we wanted! In spite of our bragging about the Congress strength, we have to confess that this matter is beyond our power.

I have not the faintest notion as I stand before you what we are going to do in this matter regarding detenus and political prisoners.

1. Speech at Shraddhanand Park, Calcutta, 28 October 1937. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 29 October 1937.

Frankly speaking, I do not know anything about it. That does not mean, of course, that we should remain silent spectators of this tragedy. This is a thing which none of us who is sensitive can ever forget. It is however a reminder of our own weakness, and to be reminded of our weaknesses is not a pleasant thing.

In any event, there is a very great responsibility in this matter and both the people and I have a common responsibility. The people have to bear it in greater proportion because it is largely due to their efforts that their comrades in the Andamans stopped their hunger strike in the hope that their release would not be delayed long. They have got to remember that Mahatma Gandhi himself pleaded for their release and the Congress Working Committee also pleaded for the same. So far as I can gather, there are various hints and suggestions thrown out by the authorities that the release of the prisoners is a matter that might be effected very soon. So those prisoners took a step, namely, putting an end to their hunger strike, relying on that hope. By this thought of approaching release, the even tenor of the prisoners' lives has been disturbed. The feeling that a great change in their lives is going to be wrought at an early date upset their mental equilibrium, preventing them from doing anything physical and mental that makes life worth living. By the agitation that has been started for their release, their countrymen have raised hopes in the minds of these prisoners and until they succeed in getting the release of their comrades from behind the prison bars, they shoulder a great responsibility.

I feel that responsibility and the Working Committee feels it; all of us feel it. No doubt, we shall do as much as we can in this matter. Yet I cannot promise to you that immediate release would be obtained because, as I confessed in the beginning, I feel powerless. I do not talk tall and I do not want you to talk tall. Still, I hope that the growing strength of the nation will certainly succeed in having its way. Therefore you and I have to concentrate our efforts not only in Bengal but in the whole of India.

In the provinces, where the Congress has accepted office, there has been, to a large extent, a different atmosphere. There is the Congress outlook in the government, but at the same time they have to carry on the same old burden in the same old atmosphere suffocating as before. It must not be forgotten that Congress ministry or no ministry, it is the British Government that rules India. It is the British army that occupies India and it is the British will that prevails in India. Still, it is perfectly true that in those Congress provinces one would find an enormous difference, may be by a few declarations and by a few executive actions. But even then one would find in the villages and in the

remotest corner of those provinces that the humblest of the peasants realises that he is in a different atmosphere and he knows that in case he is oppressed by the police or a petty official he would be able to approach even the man at the top. But in spite of this, no Indian must forget that it is the British people, the British imperialism that is dominating India. That is one side of the shield. The other side of the shield is that in spite of the old atmosphere there is entirely a new atmosphere in those provinces where Congress ministries are functioning. There is among the people a sense of exhilaration on account of this and therefore a new sense of confidence as a consequence. I do not want to discourage that spirit of exhilaration but there should be a certain discipline in that spirit.

Bengal has been carrying on the same old burden for so many years past. Her people are still living under the shadow of that tragedy but I want to tell you that the whole of India realises that fully. The whole of India, I would not use the word simply because it is patronizing, but the fact is that the whole of India feels with great anxiety about the conditions prevailing in Bengal. Because quite apart from the feeling of comradely affection it is sheer self-interest that makes us feel like this.

Whether it is a Congress province or a non-Congress province, ours is a common interest. We want the freedom of India. Our interests are so linked together that we cannot go ahead when one part of ours lags behind. I should like to tell you that I feel that you are going to have a very big change—may not be in the coming months—but in the near future.

The city of Calcutta is a great city. It has a high record of public life not only in Bengal but in the whole of India. But politics today has shifted its centre of gravity, and the strength of the nation has certainly been transferred from the cities to the rural areas, to the villages, to the mud huts and factories. Therefore Bengal would be moving and it is already moving towards the villages. While people in cities like Calcutta may protest and hold demonstrations, the rest of Bengal will no longer remain unmoved.

The Congress has begun talking about Muslim mass contact, although there is nothing special in that programme. It has been the objective of the Congress for a long time past to cultivate mass contacts with the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and in fact with all the communities. The Congress, as a political organisation, thinks in terms of India and not in terms of communities. It, therefore, pursues a policy of mass contact which is going on in the villages, in the huts, in the shops and among the humblest of men.

Among the Muslims in all parts of India the Congress ideals have rapidly spread. I hope that the Congress candidate would achieve an overwhelming victory over his rival sponsored by the Muslim League in the Bijnor election. It is the question of bread which appeals most to the masses whether they are Hindus or Mohammedans. The economic issue is the most important factor. I have not the slightest shadow of doubt that in Bengal, too, if the Muslim masses are approached with a clear-cut economic programme, they would transfer their loyalty to the Congress.

17. The Hunger Strike of the Prisoners in the Punjab[1]

I am greatly worried about the hunger strike of the political prisoners in the Punjab jails but I am helpless.[2] I have a mind to go and see the hunger strikers but I feel that it is no use my seeing them, since I have nothing else but to advise them to give up the hunger strike. I am of the opinion that the weapon of hunger strike should be used only in extraordinary circumstances. Some injustice has been done to the prisoners. They are bound to feel disappointed and those who have been prisoners themselves can very well appreciate their feelings.

The political prisoners have made some mistake in their judgment on the state of affairs in the country after the introduction of the new constitution. If we had the power, we would release all the political prisoners at once. And therefore a strong and consistent agitation may have to be carried on for their release as it is time now that they are released.

When the question of release comes, all political prisoners should be released and there should be no differentiation between the political prisoners. Civil disobedience in no form should be resorted to at present in connection with the agitation for the release of political prisoners. If that is done, the real issue would be blurred.

1. Speech at Lahore, 20 January 1938. *The Tribune*, 22 January 1938.
2. As the political prisoners in the Punjab jails, including those repatriated from the Andamans, were not released by the authorities on the ground that they gave no undertaking not to take part in subversive activities, they went on a hunger strike and appealed to Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress to take up their cause.

I am laying down the reins of office after two years. I am feeling tired now after having carried that heavy burden so long. I am not, however, physically tired. None in the Congress can sit at ease. All of us have to carry on the work.

The whole of Europe is in a state of insecurity. The League of Nations has not fulfilled its object and the balance of power has now changed. With the birth of a new Italy and a new Germany the whole face of Europe has been changed. The League of Nations does not represent the real Europe. The only work of the League of Nations, like the Liberals, is to pass pious and nicely-worded resolutions. With what has happened in Europe, the position of England has become weak. England's supremacy lay in her naval power and that country is even today building many ships. But the aeroplanes, as a weapon of war, have taken away that supremacy. Englishmen will do their utmost to save and strengthen their country. They are a brave people. But the victory is bound to be his who possesses new weapons.

Today countries are fighting undeclared wars which the legal heads refuse to recognise in spite of the havoc created by those wars in Spain, in Abyssinia and in China. The new method of war is to take a lead in the attack; for whosoever attacks first is bound to succeed.

I visualise a world war within one or two years. Japan, in spite of her brave people, is bound to have a crashing fall soon because of its ever-increasing imperialist lust.

What happens to England affects us in India also. We in India were never so strong as we are today and I am sure that no outside power can prevent us from achieving our independence.

I confess that I feel the weight of the promises and assurances given to the teeming millions when I and others went from village to village because we have not been able to do much to redeem our promises. There are two ways of making progress. One is that of agitation and the other way is that of doing constructive work. There is bound to arise a conflict between the two and I do not know when that conflict may arise.

As a practical politician, my present worry is not how to get freedom —because I believe that we are going to be free—but how to keep that freedom intact.

Though the Punjab is a brave province and there are very large numbers of good workers here, the Congress does not hold the position that it ought to, because of the differences among Congressmen which are rather personal. With the increase in power of the Congress, undesirable persons who were never with us are entering the Congress. They may prove a source of weakness to it. I am anxious to strengthen

the organisation of the Congress, lest we fall from the high position which we have attained. I am glad to say that the Punjab has during the last year increased its membership and I hope that a still greater progress will be made. I appeal to Congressmen to sink their differences, of which I am, however, not afraid because that shows that there is life in them. I suggest that, like the U.P. Congress, they may make a rule that no Congressman will go to the press with his quarrels. By that I do not mean that a fair and just criticism should not be made or truth be suppressed but what I would suggest is that their quarrels should be referred to the Congress committee first for settlement.

Some of the Punjab non-English papers, which claimed to be friends of the Congress, wrote awful things about me and the Congress. I condemn that tendency.

No circulars should be issued or posters or articles published for maligning Congressmen. Every Congressman who has served the Congress should be given an unrestricted opportunity to continue to do the work, if he so desires.

18. The Need for Peaceful Agitation[1]

When I was passing through Lahore a few days back, I spoke about the political prisoners on hunger strike. Since then certain events have happened here and my name has been used in this connection and I find I have been misinterpreted.

I should like to make it clear that while I deplore a resort to hunger strike, all my sympathies are with the political prisoners. Every sensitive Indian and lover of liberty must feel for them and desire that all of them should be released. I wish I had the power to help them, for if I had it, I would use it unhesitatingly and gladly in their favour. I am distressed exceedingly by their continued imprisonment and their act of self-immolation.[2]

1. Statement to the press, Lahore, 28 January 1938. *The Hindu*, 29 January 1938.
2. Amulya Charan Chowdhury, a detenu under order of release, committed suicide in Chittagong.

Though we have not the power to do that, we are not entirely powerless if public opinion moves in the matter. It is our duty, therefore, to carry on a ceaseless propaganda and agitation for this purpose. I stated last time that there should be no civil disobedience or breaking of laws as this was against the present policy of the Congress, but apart from this, peaceful agitation is certainly desirable.

I am sorry to learn that on the occasion of the procession in Lahore on January 24 some damage was done and offensive epithets were used.[3] I am assured that the processionists were not responsible for this, but certain irresponsible persons, who had followed the procession, misbehaved. Such acts are not only undesirable but hinder our work and injure the very cause we have at heart.

To the political prisoners, I send my deepest sympathy in their trial.

3. The Prisoners' Release Committee organized a procession in Lahore on 24 January 1938 to press for the release of the political prisoners who were on hunger strike in the Punjab.

CONGRESS MINISTRIES

19. Election of the Leader of the Bombay Congress Assembly Party[1]

The Working Committee issued a statement from Delhi in connection with the controversy which had arisen about the election of the leader of the Congress assembly party for Bombay Presidency.[2] That statement should put an end to this controversy. I feel however that I should issue a personal statement also as I have received a number of telegrams and representations on this subject which it is not possible for me to deal with separately.

Together with my colleagues of the Working Committee, I went into this matter carefully and consulted such persons as could throw light on it. I write therefore with some knowledge of the facts. It is clear that a large number of our friends and colleagues in Bombay city have been grieved at what they consider a deliberate attempt to keep out Mr. Nariman from the leadership. Mr. Nariman is popular in Bombay and deserves his popularity. But the agitation that arose seems to me to have little relation to facts and to have become almost a personal vendetta against Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. I have been astonished and grieved at the virulence of this agitation and at the way principles were forgotten and facts twisted to run down the Sardar. I am sure that most of the persons who took part in this agitation will regret it when they consider the facts coolly. In particular, the communal turn which was sought to be given was most deplorable.

I am quite convinced that Sardar Vallabhbhai had very little to do with the election. Even previous to the election he had told me that he proposed to keep out of it, except in so far as he did not want a Gujarati to contest the leadership. He stuck to this resolve and all the agitation against him is thus entirely without foundation. Bombay

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 28 March 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 29 March 1937. There was also considerable correspondence with Nariman on this subject. This correspondence has not been printed.
2. The Working Committee confirmed the election of B. G. Kher as the leader of the Congress Party in the Bombay legislature.

friends must remember that the assembly party consists of elected representatives from all over the Presidency. Bombay city is important but in point of numbers it is overshadowed by Gujarat, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. Maharashtra sends the largest contingent and so, inevitably, the views of Maharashtra count for most. The Presidency being a composite province from the Congress point of view, the position was a difficult one and members could honestly hold divergent views as to the way out of the difficulty. Sardar Vallabhbhai, to some extent, lessened this difficulty by keeping Gujarat out of the contest for leadership.

The responsibility for election lay on the elected members and they, after mutual consultation and reference to other colleagues, came to a certain conclusion with remarkable unanimity. In these consulations Sardar Vallabhbhai had very little share, though it would only have been in the fitness of things if he had taken a greater share. The whole procedure adopted was proper and democratic and undoubtedly the result was in accordance with the wishes of the great majority of the elected members.

Why then this outcry and vituperation and highly improper personal attacks? Surely some people in Bombay, however earnest or numerous they might be, wished to impose their will on the elected members from Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka. That is not democracy. There have been frequent references to autocracy and fascist methods but the methods adopted by the leaders of the agitation savour more of fascism than of democracy and I am sure they will realise this when the excitement of the moment passes. If there had been the least doubt in our minds that the will of the majority of the elected representatives had not prevailed in the election of the leader, we would willingly and gladly have asked for a fresh election. But the majority of these members have made it clear that they stand by that election.

Elections to offices in the Congress are not the distribution of prizes or spoils. Congressmen are not out for such prizes or spoils. We try to adopt the democratic method and choose those best fitted for a particular office, having regard to a variety of circumstances. Sometimes this method may not give the best results but we accept it none the less.

This agitation has been grossly unfair to Sardar Vallabhbhai. It has been unfair to Mr. Nariman. It has cast a heavy burden on Mr. Kher[3] who has already to face a difficult enough situation and who deserves all our sympathy and cooperation. Everybody knows that Mr. Kher

3. B. G. Kher (1888-1957); a solicitor of Bombay; Chief Minister, Bombay, 1937-39 and 1946-52; high commissioner of India in Britain, 1952-54; chairman, Official Language Commission, 1955 and Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, 1956.

never asked for any office and he was reluctant to have the leadership thrust on him. I earnestly hope that friends in Bombay will consider the situation coolly and put an end to an agitation which started on a false basis and which must injure our cause.

20. To Leaders of Congress Parties in Provincial Assemblies[1]

Allahabad
July 16, 1937

Dear Comrade,
In view of the acceptance of office by Congressmen in some provinces and the formation of Congress cabinets, may I draw your special attention to the resolution passed by the Working Committee at Wardha on February 28, 1937 laying down the policy to be pursued by Congressmen in the legislatures?[2] This resolution was subsequently endorsed by the A.I.C.C., and the recent permission given by the Working Committee to accept office must be interpreted in terms of that resolution. The burden of acting up to the specific Congress directions contained in this resolution now devolves on all Congress parties in the provincial assemblies, and more specially on the Congress cabinets where such exist.

The full resolution, referred to above, must be carefully read and kept in mind, so that the basic policy of the Congress in regard to the new constitution might colour and direct all our activities in the legislatures. You will also, I trust, keep in mind the election manifesto that was issued on our behalf.

This basic policy of combating the Act and the new constitution will soon have to come into operation if an attempt is made to inaugurate the federation. The proposed federation is far the worst part of the Act and it is utterly bad. It has to be resisted in every way and with every weapon at our disposal. May I suggest to you to consider this question carefully, so that when the time comes your cabinet and party may be fully prepared to offer effective resistance?

I must also remind you of the Congress direction to Congress members of the legislatures to take the earliest steps to press the demand for a constituent assembly to frame the constitution of a free India.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-1/1936, p. 3, N.M.M.L.
2. See p. 52.

Apart from this basic policy, Congress cabinets and parties have to carry out the programmes outlined in the election manifesto and in Congress resolutions. Release of political prisoners, internees and detenus must inevitably be an early step. So also the return of securities taken from newspapers and presses. A repeal of all repressive laws must follow.

On the constructive side, the land question and rural debt have to be tackled. These questions are complicated and if an attempt is made to deal with them thoroughly, some delay is inevitable. Such an attempt should, of course, be made on the lines indicated by Congress resolutions, especially the agrarian resolution of the Faizpur Congress.[3] But it is very necessary that some relief should be given to the peasantry almost immediately. This will be an earnest of the better land system that we aim at, and the masses will realise by this, as by nothing else, that a new spirit moves the new cabinets and provincial governments.

What these immediate steps are to be will depend on the land system in the province concerned and on its own peculiar problems. But relief from suits for arrears of rent and debt could be given without delay by a moratorium. A reduction in rent and revenue could follow and this should be accompanied by the imposition of income-tax, on a progressive scale, on agricultural incomes.

For industrial workers an eight hours' day is a reform that has been long overdue.

These are some of the points for your early consideration. I trust that by your prompt and decisive action you will enhance the prestige and strength of the Congress and give relief to the masses who look to the Congress for a lightening of their many burdens.

In provinces where the Congress Party is not in a majority, you will of course not be in a position to do much. But even there the same line of action should be followed, in so far as it is possible.

We shall be happy to send you Congress resolutions or other Congress literature, if you so desire.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. Pending the framing of an all-India agrarian programme, the resolution suggested: (1) readjustment of rent and revenue demands, (2) exemption from rent of uneconomic holdings, (3) levying of agricultural income-tax on a progressive scale, (4) reduction of canal and other irrigation rates, (5) abolition of forced labour and feudal dues and levies, (5) fixity of tenure with heritable rights, (7) introduction of cooperative farming, (8) cancellation of rural debt and arrears of rent, (9) statutory provision for a living wage and suitable working conditions for agriculture, and (10) recognition of peasant unions.

21. To Agatha Harrison[1]

Allahabad
July 19, 1937

Dear Agatha,

Thank you for your letters of the 24th June and 10th July.[2] During the last few days many things have happened, which seems rather strange. How far this means a change one cannot say. Anyhow the next few months will show whether it is possible to do much under present conditions....

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. She had written about the negotiations leading to the decision of the Congress to accept office and added: "some of us who are following things closely at this end glimpse—perhaps dimly—what you have gone through."

22. To Secretary, Maharashtra P.C.C.[1]

Allahabad
20.7.1937

Dear Comrade,

Your letter. I appreciate the idea behind your proposal to celebrate the fact that the Congress has taken office in various provinces but I think the proposal is premature. It is deluding people to say that Congress raj has been established. When freedom comes to us in real measure it will be time enough for us to celebrate it. There is great danger of the public being led to believe that the struggle for freedom is over if we celebrate in this fashion.

I am issuing a statement[2] to the press today more or less on this subject.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-14(i)/1937-38, p. 111, N.M.M.L.
2. See pp. 106-110.

23. To Gopinath Bardoloi[1]

Allahabad
21.7.1937

Dear Comrade,[2]

I thank you for your letter of the 4th July explaining to me what the line system is.[3] I appreciate your difficulties but I am not in a position to give a definite opinion as to what should be done. In this matter you should consult your provincial Congress committee.

As I have told you, I should welcome the opportunity of visiting Assam. But I am afraid I cannot say when this wish will be realised.

About the Speaker's salary, you must know that it should not exceed Rs. 500. Apart from this he may have house allowance and conveyance allowance. A Speaker is to some extent cut off from day to day politics. But we are not prepared to accept the dictum that in a country like India at present a Speaker must cut himself adrift from the Congress and have no relation to it. A Speaker has to be impartial in his rulings and his conduct. But he must always bear in mind the Congress goal and the Congress policy and he must, to the best of his ability, help this. I do not think it will be desirable for a Speaker to belong to the executive of the Congress, that is, to the executive committee of the P.C.C. But perhaps it may be possible for him to continue as an ordinary member of the P.C.C. if he happens to be such. This matter is not clear yet.

A Speaker cannot formally belong to the parliamentary party. But he can certainly confer with the leader of that party whenever occasion arises.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P.L. 12/1937-39, p. 151, N.M.M.L.
2. (1890-1950); joined noncooperation movement, 1921; leader of the Congress Party in the Assam Assembly, 1937; formed the coalition ministry in Assam in 1938; Chief Minister, 1946-1950.
3. The system whereby, within an area determined by a line in the neighbourhood of or inside a non-immigrant village, immigrants were not allowed to acquire any land.

24. Salaries of Public Servants[1]

The advent of Congress ministries has made the question of reducing salaries of public servants a live issue. We see, on the one hand, Congress ministers taking only a fraction of the salaries of their predecessors and, on the other hand, most other public servants in high offices drawing enormous salaries. Even professors and vice-chancellors and other academic folk measure their love of learning and service to the community by the exorbitant salaries they get. In the Punjab we have seen the remarkable spectacle of the new legislators increasing their daily allowance to a record figure.[2] The two pictures are striking enough and yet perhaps few persons appreciate the real difference. This difference is big enough in degree but it is bigger still in kind.

The Karachi resolution on fundamental rights laid down that: "Expenditure and salaries of civil departments shall be largely reduced. No servant of the state, other than specially employed experts and the like, shall be paid above a certain figure, which should not ordinarily exceed Rs. 500 a month."

It will be noted that Rs. 500 is more or less the maximum salary. This does not necessarily mean that ministers or other high officers should invariably get the maximum. The principles underlying the Congress resolution are two: (1) salaries should be in keeping with the poverty of the country and they should therefore be as low as is compatible with efficiency; (2) salaries should not be a measure of the dignity or importance of the office an individual holds but should be based on his needs.

The first of these principles is generally recognised but the second, I am afraid, is not yet sufficiently appreciated. Sensitive people feel that there is a certain indecency in drawing large salaries out of a poverty-stricken people, as in drawing large dividends out of the labour of ill-paid workers. The real fault and indecency lies in a system which permits and encourages this kind of thing. We have got so used to thinking in terms of measuring our importance and our progress in life in

1. Allahabad, 24 July 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle,* 27 July 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India,* (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 241-244.
2. The Congress resolved that the allowance of a member should not exceed Rs. 10 a day or Rs. 75 a month if a salary was to be paid plus Rs. 2/8/- as daily allowance for the days of attendance. The Unionist ministry in the Punjab, however, fixed Rs. 20 per day as allowance and Rs. 2/8/- per day for conveyance.

terms of income that it is difficult to think of other terms. And yet this is a false and pernicious standard and where money values prevail too much, men decay. But even in our money age we all know that the social and cultural value of a poor scientist or writer is often far greater than that of a rich businessman or a high official drawing a big salary. A taluqdar or big zamindar has a large income but it is a little difficult to find where his social value comes in; some people doubt if he has the slightest social value.

We must, therefore, get rid of this idea of measuring people by their incomes and salaries. Probably this standard of measurement, if inverted, would be a safer guide for us. The question involves big issues and a refashioning of our social order. As a socialist I would confidently point to the socialist solution of this as of other difficulties. But for the moment we are concerned with the salaries of public servants only.

The Congress wants, in so far as it can, to apply this principle to public salaries. That is to say, it wants to reduce them to reasonable limits, more in keeping with Indian conditions, so as to lessen the tremendous gap between the official and the man in the field, and to give back, as much as possible, of the revenue of the country to the masses in the form of social and other services. It wants to end the practice of paying progressively more to the higher officials. The office they hold should not determine the salary but the needs of the individual who holds it. An ideal system would require more or less the same payment for all services and all offices. But under present conditions this is not possible and variations must creep in. Still there is no obvious reason why a minister should be paid more than his secretary, simply because of his office. To some extent this may be occasionally necessary as the minister might have to shoulder additional responsibilities. But the principle we wish to adhere to is that a minister has no business to be paid more than his secretary simply because of his office. This would apply to other offices also. This does not mean that other salaries should also approximate to the maximum fixed, but rather that all salaries should be on lower scale, the maximum being touched only when obviously necessary.

But there are patent difficulties in the way in suddenly upsetting the present system from top to bottom. Apart from the evil inheritance from the British Government, the social system, the habits of people and many other things come in the way. And we have to face suddenly so many complex problems which demand immediate consideration. We can therefore only set certain examples before the public to begin with, but this question has a basic importance and must be dealt with fully before long. For the present we have provisionally fixed ministerial and

other salaries roughly in accordance with the Karachi resolution. That is the maximum allowed, but this maximum need not be drawn as a matter of course.

The question of allowance is intimately connected with salaries. Certain offices necessitate some appurtenances for the sake of efficiency and rapidity of work. But allowances must not become additions to the salaries, else the whole purpose of having low salaries will be defeated.

While on the one side we want to reduce salaries of the higher officers, we want also to provide for a living wage for all and to raise the standard of living of the masses. How far that is possible under the present system is another matter. The ideal we aim at is not to perpetuate poverty but to abolish it, and to raise the general standard as high as possible so that everyone may participate in the culture of the age. For this, great political and social changes will be necessary. Meanwhile we shall at least try to reduce the gap between the favoured few and the unfavoured millions.

As soon as opportunity offers itself we shall consider the question of salaries and allowances, in consultation with the Congress ministers, so that we might give effect to the real spirit of the Karachi resolution and put an end to the notion that the worth of a man or his work is measured by the salary he gets.

25. Address to the U.P. Congress Legislators[1]

We are ready to help you, but we will certainly strongly criticise you if an occasion arises. You have not been selected to run the government for the Governor but for the people. The power behind you is that of the Congress from which you have received your strength and inspiration. I would remind you of the resolutions passed by the Congress Working Committee for your guidance. You have been sent to the legislature to remedy defects and you should not betray your cause. I want you to take immediate action for the fire of starvation is aflame and you cannot pass time in consultations. Millions of eyes are watching you and if nothing is done they would be turned against you.

1. Lucknow, 27 July 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 28 July 1937.

26. To Leaders of the Congress Majority Provinces[1]

Allahabad
30.7.1937

Dear Comrade,

I should like to draw your attention to the resolution of the Faizpur Congress calling upon Congress members of the legislatures to take the earliest opportunity to put forward in the new assemblies the demand for a constituent assembly, elected by adult suffrage. After the general elections the Working Committee at its Wardha meeting dated February 27th and 28th again referred to this as follows:

> The immediate objective of the Congress in the legislatures is to fight the new constitution, to resist the introduction and working of the federal part of the Act and to lay stress on the nation's demand for a constituent assembly. Congress members of the legislatures have been directed by the Faizpur Congress to take the earliest opportunity to put forward in the new assemblies this demand for a constituent assembly, and to support it by mass agitation outside.

This resolution of the Working Committee was endorsed by the All India Congress Committee on the 18th March.

On the 20th March the All India Convention passed a long resolution, the last part of which ran as follows:

> This Convention therefore calls upon all Congress parliamentary parties to take the earliest opportunity to put forward, in the name of the nation, a demand in their respective legislatures that the Government of India Act of 1935 be withdrawn, so that the people of India may frame their own constitution.

You will thus see that great stress has been laid throughout on behalf of the Congress on this demand for the withdrawal of the present constitution and the framing of another constitution by a constituent assembly, being made at the earliest possible stage in the new assemblies. As Congress ministries have come into existence in six provinces this duty devolves upon them now.

Sessions of the provincial assemblies have taken place in all these provinces. But so far as I am aware no step has been taken by the Congress Party or the Congress ministry to bring such a resolution before

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-72/1937, pp. 35-36, N.M.M.L.

the House.[2] May I know why this has not been done so far? It is obvious that the value of unequivocal denunciation of the present Act is far less if it is made at a later stage after we have more or less accepted the position as it is. In any event, the explicit directions of the Congress cannot be ignored. Will you kindly let me know what you propose to do in this matter, so that I might place it before the Working Committee which is likely to meet in the course of two or three weeks?

In this connection may I also beg of you to keep in mind this fundamental policy of the Congress in all your activities inside or outside the legislature?

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. The Congress ministries in the six provinces subsequently secured the passage of the resolution.

27. The Responsibilities of the Ministers[1]

The acceptance of office by Congressmen has led some people to think that they have got Swaraj, while others apprehend that that might put them away from their goal of independence. The resolution of the Congress Working Committee on the subject will make the whole position clear. It clearly shows that our goal remains as it was; and though the Congress accepted office, we are continuing our pilgrimage, namely, the achievement of independence. Today is the Lokmanya Tilak Day and we should derive courage by remembering him. A great event had also taken place on August 1, seventeen years ago. The noncooperation movement was started for the first time on that date. The Congress has now decided to accept office but its ultimate objective remains unchanged. It is possible that the Congress ministers might be able to do a little for the good of the peasants but if anybody thinks that we have attained Congress raj he would be deceiving himself. We should remember that we do not desire Congress raj but want the raj of the people. I warn you against false ideas of Congress raj or Swaraj having been established in India; it is a snare and a delusion. Some may think

1. Speech at Allahabad, 1 August 1937. From *The Leader*, 3 August 1937.

that those Congressmen who have been appointed ministers have become great and the appointments might also have excited jealousy, but the ministers are laden with the burden of great responsibilities. The discipline taught by the Congress is that they should work according to the wishes of the people and I hope that whatever decisions are taken they would be based on the opinion of the people. The Congress has not changed its goal and the methods pursued for the last seventeen years; the charge that it has done so is not correct. The Congress still adheres to the goal of independence and its principles of struggle remain the same. Owing to certain circumstances it has decided to accept ministerships but it has not changed the basic principles of struggle. It is still committed to the achievement of independence and the removal of people's poverty. The ministers have limited powers and the people should not have high hopes of them. I sympathise with the difficult position of the Congress ministers for the heavy responsibility that has been placed on them, and on their decisions depends the fate of millions. If they stumble, lakhs of people would stumble with them.

I want the people to think for themselves and express their opinions regarding the Congress ministers' actions. Lack of thought and criticism make the people weak, but I also want them to work in unity and maintain their discipline. This is the lesson that the Congress has taught us.

People must not forget that the ministers are no longer the creation of Governors but of the people. They can be asked to vacate office and be replaced by others. The power of the ministers depends on the people's power. The ministries are small things before bigger events which we have to face and for which we must be forewarned and remain prepared.

Though some political prisoners have been released in some provinces, many of them are still in jail and, therefore, it is necessary that we should demand their release as early as possible. Many prisoners are in the Andamans where politicals are said to be on hunger strike.[2] Confinement of prisoners outside India is not proper as it deprives them of the opportunities of meeting their relations. Sardar Teja Singh had been elected to the Punjab Legislative Assembly by the people, and yet he is detained without trial and that shows our helplessness.

I do not want Congress raj but people's raj. If the Congress ministers cannot satisfy the people's demands even to a limited extent, their

2. 187 political prisoners demanded the release of all political prisoners and detenus and repeal of all repressive laws and went on hunger strike on 24 July 1937.

acceptance of office would be a thoroughly worthless affair and sheer waste of time.

28. To Gopinath Bardoloi[1]

Allahabad
4.8.1937

Dear Comrade,
You wrote to me some time ago about the line system and I sent you a brief reply. I have since received a letter from Mr. Abdul Hamid Khan[2] on this subject and I have given some further thought to the matter. As you have pointed out, Mr. Abdul Hamid Khan has little to do with the Congress. But I have tried to consider this question apart from individuals. It is obvious that in theory any such ban put on the population of a province is undesirable. We are at the present moment pressing for the removal of the Criminal Tribes Act.[3] The ban is not only undesirable in point of theory, but in practice it often results in an aggravation of the evils to prevent which the ban was imposed. For it results in separatism and a continuous feeling of conflict between the groups. The problem is not solved in this way but is checked to some extent and aggravated in some other respects. I cannot, with the material at my disposal and being ignorant of the local conditions, presume to give a definite opinion. That is for you and your party to decide or, if necessary, the matter might be referred to the Working Committee in so far as the principle is concerned. But I would like you and your party to consider this matter in its larger aspects and not to infringe the principles of civil liberty for which we stand. Perhaps the best way to deal with it would be to consider it as a part of the larger agrarian problem. I do not know if you intend tackling this problem at all in Assam. But it should be tackled. It may be possible to lay down certain rules of general application limiting transfers of land to some extent in order to prevent formation of large holdings in single hands. There may be other ways of dealing with this. But to isolate a group that is

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P.L. 12/1937-39, pp. 149-150, N.M.M.L.
2. A member of the Assam Assembly; requested that the Assam Congress Party should support his move in the assembly for the annulment of the line system.
3. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, which was intended to prevent the anti-social activities of the criminal tribes, was amended several times, and finally repealed on 28 February 1952.

backward and perhaps criminally inclined is to confirm it in its backwardness and criminality. That is a fundamental rule of sociology and it should not be ignored.

You should also consider the political effect of any decision of yours on the province and on India. Your local conditions may not be known everywhere but you will be open to criticism nevertheless for having infringed an elementary principle. I write all this to you to invite your serious consideration to every aspect of the matter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

29. On the Congress Policy in the Provinces[1]

> Question: What are your views on the recent Gandhi-Viceroy meeting?[2]

Jawaharlal Nehru : I do not know if there is any precise significance to be attached to this meeting.

> Q: The Congress Party likes flying its flag on public buildings. What is your view?

JN : Our flag is more than a party flag. Some of our opponents even used our flag during the general elections. As far as I know there is no legal enactment for the use of the Union Jack in India. The Congress does not wish to employ the Congress flag in a hostile spirit towards the Union Jack because we fully recognise that the Union Jack is Britain's flag. But inevitably the Union Jack has become a symbol, although the flag itself is not resented. It is the national flag that should be in evidence everywhere in India.

1. Interview to the press, Allahabad, 7 August 1937. From *Hitavada*, 8 August 1937.
2. In response to an invitation from the Viceroy, Mahatma Gandhi met him on 4 August 1937. They discussed the problems of rural uplift and peasants' conditions. Mahatma Gandhi also conveyed to the Viceroy his views on his proposed visit to the N.W.F.P. and the ban on the entry of Abdul Ghaffar Khan into that province.

Q: What is your opinion about the Congress ministers being members of the Working Committee also?

JN: The Working Committee would like a convention to grow whereby the Congress ministers would not be members of the Working Committee. The ministers, however, are liable to be called in for consultation.

Q: What is the Congress policy in the provinces where the party has formed ministries?

JN: The policy will vary slightly in certain provinces but fundamentally it will be uniform. Different problems will be tackled keeping in view their urgency in particular provinces. In the United Provinces, as in most other provinces, the agrarian problem is the principal one.

The U.P.P.C.C. has studied the agrarian question very closely for the last seven years. Its ultimate objective is the abolition of the zamindari system. Opinions differ as to how this system can be abolished. Tiny holdings must be done away with and large cooperative holdings should take their place. That entails a complete change in the present situation. Many zamindars having a modern outlook believe that the present system will have to go, but they will want full compensation. The question of full compensation, in equity, does not arise, nor is it possible to think, in practice, of full compensation, as that would mean retaining the present burden on the tenantry in another form. But it is always desirable to avoid major conflicts and the cost thereof by giving some compensation. The Congress cannot easily deal with this basic problem. So now its immediate problem will be to lessen the burden on both the tenantry and petty zamindars.

The agrarian question is, of course, linked up with the industrial problem, that is to say, with the development of both machines and cottage industries so as to absorb the unemployed and increase the wealth of the country. That again is linked up with the question of social services, thereby becoming in fact a many-sided problem, each part of which is interlocked with the other, thus necessitating joint consideration and planned action on the part of those concerned. This obviously cannot take place unless the people at the back of it have complete political and economic power, and are not obstructed by big vested interests, foreign or Indian.

Putting up customs barriers against Japanese goods does not necessarily redound to India's benefit unless you push on the policy of industrial development in India which will profit by tariff measures. Such measures must not now be allowed to help the monopoly interests in

India. An increased tax on Japanese goods, which will benefit British goods, does not help Indians. If however there is a big industrial development, then even though the imports would not decrease, their nature would change. Ultimately the imports would decrease as India would possess heavy machines which would enable her to manufacture her own machinery.

In so far as finance is concerned, the Congress intends to introduce a progressive tax on agricultural incomes above a certain minimum.

30. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
August 7, 1937

My dear Krishna,

I have not written to you much lately and I owe you several letters. But I doubt if I can repay my debt today...

I am sorry to learn that you are having personal difficulties. Nothing interferes with one's activities so much, public or private, as the difficulties which make one live under a continuous strain. However, one cannot permit oneself to be pushed down by circumstances and it is seldom worthwhile worrying much about them.

I have read Stafford Cripps' opinion. This has confirmed me in my opinion that I should not risk a legal contest.[2] Therefore I leave it at that. Whatever other steps you consider desirable, apart from going to a court of law, you might take. I do not understand one thing. There must be numerous authors, more or less in the same legal position as I am in regard to John Lane. Have they all resigned themselves to a loss of their old royalties and is no one of them raising the question himself? However that may be, I think definitely that invoking the law would mean great trouble for me and you, and might mean throwing good money after bad. Then again there are political consequences which are not desirable...

In one of your letters you give a list of various movements[3] like peace movement, cultural cooperation, civil liberties, youth and students,

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. Jawaharlal's publishers, John Lane, went into liquidation and there was a temporary cessation of royalty payments.
3. In his letter of 21 July 1937, Krishna Menon referred to these various movements in England functioning as separate entities and hoped to draw them together.

socialists, labour and peasant—a formidable list. We have all these in varying degrees but a handful of people have to carry on with them, usually the same people. The socialist movement is suffering at the present moment with all manner of growing pains and slightly disruptive tendencies.

For the moment the work for us here has become exceedingly heavy and all manner of main problems arise. It is a curious position and it is a little difficult to prophesy what will happen in the future. One thing is certain: that the Congress ministers will have a very hard and unenviable time. You mention contradictory statements from Congressmen. That is not surprising because those contradictory tendencies are present in the country. And yet the unifying tendencies are also present. On the one side there is a desire to sit down and peg away at administrative and legislative work, on the other, there is the ever-present idea of conflict in the future and preparation for it. Most people, I think, including those whom I might call centrists in the Congress, realise that conflict is inevitable. It is inherent in the scheme of things and not all the goodwill in the world can avoid it. The approach to this probable conflict is different of course. Probably few persons are haunted quite so much by this sense of conflict to come as Gandhiji, and one can see this peeping out of some of his recent articles.[4] But mostly people get put off by his approach and his language. In the last issue of the *Congress Socialist* there are two articles condemning and criticising a recent utterance of his.[5] Both these articles are quite singularly stupid and have failed to understand the real significance of what he has been writing. It is obvious that he is not writing as a socialist nor does he use socialist phraseology, but thinking and writing on the nationalist plane he has taken up a strong enough attitude.

You mentioned some time ago that you feared that the federation scheme might not be objected to strongly enough. I think your fears are unjustified, though you have valid grounds for them. There are people in the Congress who might, with a gesture of resignation, accommodate themselves to the federation. But I think that the general sense of the Congress is bitterly hostile to it, and the only question is

4. Writing in the *Harijan* of 17 July 1937 on the Congress ministries, Mahatma Gandhi stated: "Office acceptance was not intended to work the Act anyhow... In the prosecution by the Congress of its goal of complete independence, it is a serious attempt on the one hand to avoid a bloody revolution and on the other to avoid mass civil disobedience on a scale hitherto not attempted."

5. Two articles entitled "Non-Violent Approach" and "The Mahatma Misleads", which appeared in the *Congress Socialist* of 24 July 1937, criticised Mahatma Gandhi's views on the Act of 1935 and office acceptance by the Congress.

how best to fight it. There is a possibility, however, of the contest coming before the federation appears on the scene.

We have got extraordinarily complicated and difficult problems to face from day to day and Gandhiji's somewhat unusual notions of what to do and how to do it sometimes increase the difficulties of the ministers. Then there are some people in our own ranks who create difficulties enough on the other side.

But why should I give you a catalogue of these complications and difficulties? We all have to face them everywhere and when I think of Spain and what is happening between China and Japan, and what might happen all over the world, all this sobers me, and, curiously enough, the burden seems to be a little lighter.

You mentioned in one of your letters that I might attend a peace gathering on the 16th and 17th of October. I should like to do so but I fear I cannot leave India at this stage. I think my presence here does make a difference. The rumour that I am going to Europe in the autumn or winter is almost entirely without foundation. But certainly we shall give full cooperation to this gathering and to the committee formed for the purpose. I should like you to keep in touch with them and represent us whenever the necessity arises.

You want my authority to represent India on some kind ot an executive dealing with this Spanish affair. I do not quite understand what this central committee is, but certainly you can join it on our behalf and represent us there. Exactly whom you will represent, I do not quite know. But that is immaterial and we need not go into it. If necessary, I could get a formal Congress authorisation for you but I think for the moment you can act on my authority as Congress President.

There is a kind of a Spain-India committee in India but it is a paper committee doing nothing. Indeed it has not got going. If you think that you would like a formal resolution of the Congress, you can send me more particulars of the committee and I shall put the matter before the Working Committee....

You seem to imagine that the coming of Congress ministries might release me to some extent. As a matter of fact the very opposite is happening....

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

31. The Problems before the Congress Ministries[1]

It is after eight months that I am visiting Bombay. During this period many things have happened in India and in the world. After the Faizpur session of the Congress, the Delhi Convention and the A.I.C.C. meetings were held where the question of office was decided. Before that the Congress had come out triumphantly in the elections, and after the elections the decision on the question of office could not be postponed, and conditional acceptance was decided upon. It resulted in a constitutional controversy on the question of assurances. The position was cleared to a great extent, and the Congress decided upon acceptance of office. Following that decision, Congressmen formed ministries in six provinces. This was a new line of action so far as the Congress is concerned.

After the acceptance of office many began to doubt whether the Congress fight for achieving Indian freedom was over or was to continue. When some of the Congressmen themselves began to feel like that, it is not at all surprising if the others also felt so. Yet, the fundamental policy of the Congress remains the same. Independence cannot be achieved through the councils. We can win it only by a greater struggle than what we had waged and we must prepare for it.

World events are moving fast. Though it is called a civil war, the war that is in progress in Spain is a conflict between two forces, namely, democracy and fascism. Indians sympathise with those who are fighting for democracy and have helped them to the extent a poor country like India can. Japan has been slicing China off bit by bit for her own benefit. Her latest act is resented by the Chinese people, possibly because they have gained in strength, or it might be because they became desperate and could not tolerate Japanese aggression any further. The Indian problem is part of the world problem and it would be difficult to get a clear conception of the Indian problem unless one understands the world problem properly.

The Indian provinces are as big as the countries in Europe, each province having a problem of its own. The British Government is the same in all the Indian provinces, following a uniform policy. The Congress should also follow the same policy in all the provinces; if not, it might weaken its strength, as each province would begin to look at things from its provincial point of view. That forebodes danger.

1. Speech at Bombay, 9 August 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 10 August 1937.

Acceptance of office by the Congress does not mean that Indians have got Swaraj, and it would be foolish to say that there is Congress raj in provinces where the Congress has accepted office. If that is so, why should there have been so much agitation regarding the Government of India Act during the last three years? The Government of India Act has been given to India not because the British suddenly fell in love with Indians and their aspirations. The Act is a clever and subtle move on the part of the British who have experience of ruling over oppressed nations during the past 200 years. It is a clever move to divide Indians. The Government of India Act consists of two parts. The first one is the provincial autonomy part and the second is the federation part. The federal part of it is a slavish thing seeking to introduce a similar regime as is prevalent in any Indian state. If the federal part of the Act came into force it would be difficult to carry on the fight for Indian freedom, and so every man and woman should resist it and prevent its coming.

Under the provincial autonomy scheme nothing big can be achieved. The big questions like poverty, unemployment, etc., cannot be solved till Indians are completely free. The Congress ministers now have to face difficulties at every turn. Offices were accepted by Congressmen, not because they thought that Swaraj could be won through ministries but because they believed that the strength of the masses could be increased and the Congress organisation could be strengthened. The biggest problem in India today is the kisan problem and the ministers will try to lessen the burden of the kisans as far as they can. Both those who were for acceptance of office and those who were against had the same objective in view, namely, strengthening the Congress and preparing for the fight for complete independence.

There are different views within the Congress. The doors of the Congress are open to everyone who subscribes to the objective that India should have Purna Swaraj. The doors are shut against those who do not subscribe to that objective. When decision on acceptance of office was taken everyone knew the dangers of such a course. It was possible that there might be fighting on smaller questions and the bigger questions might be forgotten. After consideration of the pros and cons, the decision was taken by the Congress. As to what might happen a few days hence, it is difficult to say at present. To believe that the Congress ministers will do wonders is to expect too much of them. What can the poor ministers do with their limited powers? Their hands and feet are tied.

I deprecate unnecessary attacks on the Congress ministers for not doing this or that. Undue pressure ought not to be brought on them. It is for the people to strengthen the hands of the Congress ministers

instead of playing into the hands of the imperialists by attacking the Congress ministers. If the people do not like a minister or his actions, they have every right to remove him. But it would not be proper to attack him and still want him to retain his position as a minister. Weakening the ministers would mean weakening themselves and the Congress. Individuals within the Congress ministries do not count. They are there because they are Congressmen. Anything that they may or may not do is the responsibility of the Congress. They are elected representatives of the people and any attack on them would be an attack on the Congress and the people themselves. The British are a clever people. The Act that they have introduced is to divide Indians and make them look at things from a provincial point of view. That is bound to happen as that is the objective of the first part of the Act. Hence it is essential to have a uniform policy for all the provinces so that the people might not fall into the trap placed for them. The people might attack the Congress ministers for not doing this or that and that is what is wanted by the British. For not doing a certain thing the people would get dissatisfied with the Congress ministers and the British would take advantage of that position to crush the Congress.

Till now the work that the Congress carried on was quite different from the work that has now been undertaken by some Congressmen. The Congress has laid stress on organisation and discipline. It fought with the British Government and succeeded in its fight to a great extent because of its discipline. But now the Congress has undertaken to follow some other method of work side by side with its usual activities.

We are fighting to establish democracy and the Congress is a democratic organisation. Every Congressman has a right to express his view. I do not, for a minute, suggest that the people should give up making their just demands but I want to warn them against the pitfalls of bringing undue pressure and making uncalled-for attacks on the Congress ministers. The responsibility of the Congress ministers is the responsibility of every Congressman. If the ministers spend sleepless hours trying to solve difficult problems, I myself have spent sleepless hours to solve the self-same problems. Congressmen should place the demands of the workers and peasants before the people and popularise them. The ministers are after all the servants of the people and will have to come out of their offices if the people so desire. The attitude of the people towards the Congress ministers should be one of sympathetic watchfulness and their actions should help the Congress ministries and not force them to take a certain course of action.

I want everyone to understand the real meaning of democracy. The decision of the majority should be binding on everyone. That decision

should be accepted and carried out in a disciplined manner. There is pleasure in doing so. Democracy does not mean forcing the opinion of a particular city on the representatives of a whole province.

I am honoured by the people for they have elected me as the Congress President twice continuously. There are but six months and a little more left for me to complete my tenure of office. I am anxiously looking forward to that day when I could transfer my burden. It is a heavy burden. The work of a Congress President is not an easy one. I have to attend to several things, enquire into many matters, issue suitable instructions, etc. There is a possibility of mistakes being committed. It is likely that I might break down before the tenure of office is over. Not that I would not have any responsibility after I transfer the burden of presidentship to some other shoulders, but it would certainly be a lesser burden.

The Congress has demonstrated to the world what it can do with organisation and discipline. It has been proved beyond doubt that the only organisation in the whole of India which can put up a fight is the Indian National Congress.

The demarcation between the Congress and the non-Congress provinces in the country is evident and the difference would be more evident if the people help and cooperate with the Congress ministries. The Bengal ministry's attitude regarding the Andaman prisoners is curious. The present ministry has stated, like its predecessor, that they will not consider the question of the Andaman prisoners until they give up hunger strike. It only shows the weakness of that ministry. The question of the Andaman prisoners is a question which has been agitating the whole country for a long time. When the hunger strike was started, it is stated, the officers there passed insulting remarks against the prisoners. The question of the Andaman prisoners is not a question affecting the province of Bengal only but the whole country. It has therefore been decided to observe the Andaman Day on August 14 and I hope that everyone would join in celebrating that day.

32. The Congress and the Federation[1]

I can say on behalf of the Congress that there cannot be any negotiation with the Viceroy or the British Government for the inauguration of

1. Address to Congressmen at Bombay, 11 August 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 12 August 1937.

the federation. Mahatma Gandhi did not discuss the question with the Viceroy and will never discuss it. Anybody, even if he be a Congress minister, will be a traitor to the country if he, in any way, facilitates the inauguration of the federation.

The Congress ministers and Congressmen in general want to break the front of the federation, the back of the federation and the left and right of the federation, and throw it at the face of those who framed it; because the federation means handing over of the destiny of India to British capitalists and vested interests.

The question of the election of the leader of the Congress Party in the Bombay Assembly had been decided at the Congress Working Committee meeting at Delhi. When called upon, Mr. K.F. Nariman did not place before the Working Committee any proof that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel interfered in the election. So the Working Committee's decision should be taken as final. As a matter of fact, I had written to Mr. Nariman inquiring whether he wanted some members of the Working Committee to inquire into the affair, but Mr. Nariman did not reply.

A strong volunteer organisation for the mass contact programme is very necessary. Though Congressmen have entered the legislatures, the real field of struggle is outside.

33. The Congress and Mass Contact[1]

Our aim has always been the attainment of complete independence for India. The formation of Congress ministries does not alter our aim. It does not in any way change our policy of wrecking the constitution.

The establishment of Congress ministries has not brought Congress raj. But it is wrong to say that they are utterly useless. If the ministers could achieve nothing then what was the need for having such a long controversy that had preceded the acceptance of office by the Congress?

If the Congress ministers can achieve anything at all, they can do so only with the full support of the people. To weaken the ministries is to weaken the Congress.

1. Speech at Bombay, 11 August 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 12 August 1937.

Mass organisation is the only weapon with which we can face the British Government and it is to mass organisation that we must give our increased attention.

Several things have happened since I last addressed a meeting at this very place. But the chief event has been the assumption of office by the Congress. Since 1919 the Congress has been following a policy of noncooperation with the government. Even when we were not engaged in active civil disobedience, our attitude had been one of non-cooperation.

We have to support fully the Congress ministries because they are appointed by the people themselves. The only strength behind the ministries is the strength of the Congress, the strength of the people; and to weaken the ministries is to weaken the Congress.

The British Government have not suddenly fallen in love with India and conferred a great privilege on her. Their only wish is to weaken the Congress. They thought that we would be involved in the little problems of the ministries. They hope to break our unity by the lure of power. Our aim is to consolidate and enhance our strength. The ministries are posed with problems every day. There are snares waiting for them at every step, and without the wholehearted support of the Congress and the people, they cannot carry on.

I therefore appeal to you to strengthen the Congress by enrolling yourselves as Congress members in large numbers. The Muslim mass contact drive does not mean any separate programme for the Muslims. There can be no such separate programme. A political organization fighting for independence cannot think in terms of communities or communal interests. The doors of the Congress are open to all, and those who want full freedom for their motherland and bread for her starving millions should join the Congress.

34. Political Consciousness among the People[1]

Our national work no longer consists in merely making speeches. New difficulties and problems have arisen which demand our attention and

1. Speech at Bombay, 12 August 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 13 August 1937.

energy. But public meetings and speeches are not yet entirely superfluous.

Why do I come here to address you? I come to place before you the various problems that face the country so that you could consider and think over them, hold discussions and then give your opinion through your ward, district and provincial Congress committees. It is thus alone, after a process of sifting and crystallization, that we can obtain the verdict of the whole country on important issues of national policy. That is the basis of democracy and we want to make that the basis of the Congress organization. I, therefore, appeal to you to use your powers of judgment and not follow anyone blindly, for that may kill your initiative.

The only basis of Swaraj is the will of the masses. There should be Congress committees in every village and in every street where people should frequently meet to discuss various local and national problems. They would thus not only strengthen the national movement but also develop political consciousness among the people without which attainment of Swaraj would not be possible.

The greatest problem is that of national freedom. Its solution requires the conscious effort on the part of the vast mass of the people. A new problem has been created by the acceptance of office. Do not be under the illusion that we have got any real power. The exigencies of the international situation have induced the British to make a show of transfer of some power to Indians but the British have reserved the real power for themselves. We have accepted office to strengthen the movement and to give what little relief we can to the people. But we should never forget that it involves no compromise with the fundamental demands and that we should always be ready for the final struggle.

Even now we must prepare to resist the poisonous scheme of federation which would soon be inflicted on India. In the same way we should be ready to resist any attempt to involve us in any imperialist war. That can be done only by strengthening the Congress organization.

We want our country to be a living country, where every man and woman should, by his or her conscious will, contribute to the general well-being and happiness of our people.

35. On the Policy of the Congress Ministries[1]

Question: Why is the ban on labour leaders not lifted by the Congress ministries?

Jawaharlal Nehru: The Congress ministries have their own difficulties to face; the all-India contacts of the labour leaders of the Presidency are responsible for the delay in the removal of the restrictions against them.

Q: What is your opinion about the Madras Government's recent *communique?*[2]

JN: The *communique* is vague and might have been misconstrued. Not merely the Congress ministry, but any ministry should give the fullest freedom and liberty, as the common law in England, for expression of opinion and ideas. But no government can tolerate open preaching of violence. I would be extremely sorry if any government placed restrictions against freedom of speech and spread of ideas so long as violence was not preached.

Q: What shall be the Congress attitude towards the Coronation durbar?

JN: The Congress ministers will have to carry out the Congress decision regarding the Coronation durbar, and if the British Government wants to avoid a conflict between the Congress ministers and the Governors, they should keep the King in England.

Q: What is the best solution of the Palestine question?

JN: The best solution of the Palestine question is to arrive at an amicable settlement through discussion between the Arabs and the Jews themselves by keeping the British out of Palestine. I have the support of the leaders of both sides when I express this view.

1. Interview to the press, Bombay, 12 August 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 13 August 1937.
2. The *communique* stated that the government's decision to release political prisoners should not be interpreted as a licence for 'any form of subversive activities and warned the people against the spread of class hatred.

Q: What steps will be taken by the Congress to prevent the inauguration of the federation?

JN: That will depend on what tactics would have to be adopted at the particular time and I do not want to reveal at this stage what I think should be done.

Q: What will be the policy of the Congress ministries?

JN: The Working Committee meeting at Wardha will consider several questions arising out of the acceptance of office by Congressmen in six provinces. The whole question will be dealt with from an all-India point of view and a uniform policy will have to be evolved, though special provincial problems will be left for the consideration of the provincial parties concerned.

The Working Committee might also consider the question of salaries of the ministers as also of the parliamentary secretaries and leave the details to be settled by the provincial parties. The problem of salaries is fundamentally a difficult one. While during the old regime the authorities decided upon 10 or 15 per cent cut in the salaries, the Congress was looking at the reduction in salaries from an absolutely different standpoint. We have to take into consideration the general poverty of the country. It is not a question of abler the man higher the salary. The salary has to be fixed at a level beyond which it cannot be reduced further while keeping efficiency in view.

Q: Do you think constructive criticism of the Congress ministries is desirable?

JN: It is difficult to draw a line regarding criticism, constructive or destructive. Hostile criticism which leads to the weakening of the ministries should be avoided. I do not mean that the Congress ministries should not be criticised. It is a matter of psychological approach to the problems.

It is one thing to draw attention to certain things and pull up the ministers towards their duty and make criticisms which would strengthen the hands of the ministers, and quite another if it were hostile criticism. To imagine that the Congress ministers can do everything is a false impression, and it would be wrong to proceed further on such a false impression and criticise the ministers. If a hostile mentality is prevailing, then it would only make the Congress ministers despair and do nothing.

Q: Will the question of Kakori prisoners and others result in a deadlock in the United Provinces?

JN: The Indian Penal Code is a comprehensive thing under which anything and everything can be brought. The Code may require to be overhauled, but since it is an all-India measure it cannot be overhauled now. In regard to the special legislation which was meant to be used against the politicals, the position of the Congress is quite different and clear. There are several prisoners in the United Provinces who have been convicted for totally non-political offences. As a matter of fact, I was sentenced to two years' imprisonment on charges of criminal intimidation and extortion.[3] That did not come under political offences. As, however, people knew me it was all right. Similarly there are several unknown persons who have been imprisoned on those charges. Then there are several who have been sentenced on charges of bad antecedents. I consider the provisions relating to this as bad but I do not know how many share my views. Surely the ministry could not say that all those who have been sentenced on charges of bad antecedents or criminal intimidation and extortion should be released. It would have to go through individual cases and decide whether they were political or non-political cases.

Q: Do you like the suggestion that there should be a Muslim Congress President in the coming year?

JN: I welcome the suggestion but I am against the choice being made on purely communal grounds. It would be inadvisable and foolish for the Congress Working Committee to make suggestions as to who should be the President of the Congress next year.

The job of the Congress President has become rather a heavy one and one cannot have communal considerations in mind in selecting the Congress President. Ordinarily speaking that would be an excellent thing and we would welcome it. But I am not prepared to consider the question solely from the point of view that it should be a gesture of goodwill towards a particular community. If the delegates to the Congress think that it would be a wise course, they are at liberty to do so.

Q: What shall be the function of the army, the police and the jails under the Congress regime?

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 252-257.

JN: The Congress after due consideration had decided to accept non-violence as its technique and policy. But even a pacifist government, required to resist foreign invasion, cannot say that it will not use force to resist foreign aggression. Suppose there is a counter-revolution and there are attempts made to upset the government of the day, then even a pacifist government which fails to convince the other party with arguments, will have to put down the counter-revolution through force of arms. Government is the coercive part of the state. Even a pacifist government has to maintain an army. There may be occasions when people, whether strikers or not, indulge in violence. No government can tolerate it because such an outbreak of violence has dangerous potentialities and will have to be put down and brought under control. For example, in the city of Bombay, such an outbreak of violence would become a minor civil war and would upset the civic life of the city. The trouble might have been started with the best of motives, but later hooligans, who care a hoot for the rights of this or that side, join in the trouble just to loot. It would be the duty of the state to put the trouble down. The Congress ministers will have to instruct and see that the police do not take any peremptory action. They will have to judge each case on its merits before opening fire.

Violence is vulgar and the use of it coarsens a nation. Violence always leads to further violence and never solves a problem. Even if it did solve one problem, it creates half a dozen more problems. It is a barbarous way of settling questions. But force cannot be entirely eliminated in the present conditions. For example, if I were to be in Spain today, my duty would be to take up a gun, fight for the Spanish Government and not sit quiet and see women and children slaughtered. The other alternative left for me would be to do nothing at all and run away from the country. When I see violence being committed it shocks me because I am a civilised human being, and not because I am afraid.

Q: In view of your recent speeches, would it be correct to say that you have changed your views regarding the Government of India Act?

JN: To think so would be to show lack of intelligence.

Q: Do you think that reduction of salaries will partly solve India's poverty?

JN: The real way to remove poverty from our land lies through changing the entire social structure. The lowered salaries that are being

received by the Congress ministers will in no way solve the problem of Indian poverty. This only serves as an example for others in the government to follow. So long as there is no check on the enormous profits made by the industrialists and others, the problem cannot be effectively solved. The salaries that the officials receive are monstrous. In Japan, which is one of the richest countries in the world, the salaries of half a dozen high officials may not exceed the salary received by a single high-salaried man in India. The chief of police there receives something between rupees four hundred to five hundred and the ordinary constable between rupees forty to fifty, while in India the police chief receives about twenty five hundred and the ordinary constable about rupees twenty seven only. One can very well see the enormous differences that exist in the salaries of the high and the low.

I am personally against giving up of wants deliberately. If there are a large number of people receiving small salaries, and a few receive very high salaries, it is vulgar and improper for the high officials to receive high salaries. The general level of living in India should be raised. I do not mind however high it may go.

36. To Sajjad Zaheer[1]

Allahabad
August 25, 1937

My dear Banne,
I understand that some kind of a demonstration took place a few days back in front of the *kutchery* in which a considerable number of kisans were involved. These kisans apparently came with some grievances against their zamindars.[2] In the course of this demonstration slogans and cries were raised against the Congress and the Congress ministry. I have not been able to find out yet in detail as to what actually happened. I happened to see Lal Bahadur yesterday and I asked him about it. He

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. On 17 August 1937, a number of tenants, who had been forcibly ejected from their lands in Allahabad district, marched in procession shouting slogans against the zamindars.

told me something but that was not enough and I asked him to get further particulars from you.

Some important questions of principle are involved in this matter, such as the desirability of Congressmen demonstrating against and condemning the Congress ministries and the Congress. Further, the use of the red flags in such functions. It is desirable that we should consider these fully. It may be necessary to have a meeting of the town Congress committee for the purpose. But before we call that I should like to know all the facts.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

37. To A. B. Tribhuwan[1]

Allahabad
August 26, 1937

Dear Mr. Tribhuwan,[2]

I am in receipt of your letter of August 12th together with the appeal.[3] You must know that it has been repeatedly stated on behalf of the Congress that the Indian Christian community has an honoured place in our political and social life. But I do not think it is right for you or for anyone else to think of ministries in connection with communal and religious groups. That seems to me to lead to dangerous consequences. The Congress is pledged to protect and encourage minorities. But it would become an absurdity if cabinets are formed on a communal basis. The first consideration in the Congress is the political consideration. You yourself say that up to now Indian Christians have maintained an attitude of strict neutrality so far as the Congress and the British Government are concerned. Do you not feel that this very neutral position makes it a little difficult for them to be considered as Congressmen? I know, of course, that there are good Congressmen among the Christians. But for the moment, I am referring to the community as a whole. I imagine

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-76/1937, p. 463, N.M.M.L.
2. A pleader in Ahmednagar.
3. He had appealed for representation of the Indian Christian community in the provincial ministries formed by the Congress.

that the Indian Christians, if they took a lead in the nationalist movement, would take a much larger share in it than their numbers warrant, because generally speaking their educational standards are higher.

As you know, the cabinets in the various provinces have already been formed and the question of changing them does not arise at present.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

38. To B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya[1]

Allahabad
August 27, 1937

Dear Comrade,
I understand that your P.C.C. executive passed a resolution on the 17th August regarding the attitude of Congressmen towards the Congress ministry. This resolution rightly lays down that Congressmen should not condemn the conduct of the ministry in the press or on the platform. Further it goes on to say that no Congress committee, other than the Andhra P.C.C., should discuss the conduct of the ministry at its meeting and that doubts, if any, should be intimated to the Andhra P.C.C.

I do not quite understand what is meant by the latter part of this resolution. But it may mean that practically all discussion on public issues is not to take place in Congress committees or in the public, except by opponents of the Congress. This seems to me an unsafe policy. The position we have to face today is undoubtedly peculiar and full of difficulty. We are on the one hand an agitational organisation; on the other hand, we are indirectly responsible for some provincial governments. If we disapprove of those provincial governments, it is in our power, as the Congress, to remove them. If so, it is a little absurd for us to criticise our own creations. And yet if we suppress the public consideration of the problems before the ministries, we suppress all initiative in our local committees and primary members and this would lead to the winding up of a great deal of our mass activity. We have to build up our strength on the initiative of primary members and local committees. It is a little difficult to draw the line but I would like the fullest discussion on such

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-3(i)/1937-38, p. 213, N.M.M.L.

matters. But the discussion is to take place in a friendly and constructive way and to be in the nature of recommendations. If that background is kept, no harm can be done. I should like you and your committee to consider this aspect of the question. I fear that any tendency to suppress frank discussion will lead to undesirable consequences and bitterness. It might even lead to the very thing that we desire to avoid, that is a condemnation of ministries. We have to proceed on democratic lines and to develop both the freedom and the discipline of a democracy.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

39. The Right Perspective[1]

The formation of Congress ministries in six provinces has brought a breath of fresh air in the turgid and authoritarian atmosphere of India. New hopes have arisen, new visions full of promise float before the eyes of the masses. We breathe more freely for the moment at least. And yet our task is infinitely harder, more complex, and dangers and difficulties beset us at every step. We are apt to be misled by the illusion that we possess power, when the reality of power is not within our grasp. But the responsibility is ours in the eyes of the people and if we cannot discharge this to their satisfaction, if hopes are unfulfilled and visions unrealised, the burden of disillusion will also be ours. The difficulty lies in the inherent contradiction of the situation, in the vastness of India's problems demanding a far-reaching and radical remedy, which it is not in our power to give under present conditions. We have to keep the right perspective always before us, the objectives for which the Congress stands, the independence of India and the ending of the poverty of the people. We have at the same time to labour for smaller ends which bring some immediate relief to the masses. We have to act simultaneously on this double front.

If we are to achieve any success in this great enterprise, we must keep faith with our people, be frank with them, take them into our confidence, and tell them our difficulties and what we can hope to achieve and what

1. Allahabad, 30 August 1937. *The Leader*, 4-6 September 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 285-300.

we cannot, till greater power comes to us. We must examine the principles on which we stand, the anchor which holds us, for to forget them is to cast ourselves on a sea of pettiness and trivial detail, with no lighthouse to guide us on our path. We dare not grow complacent.

All our activities must therefore be guided by the objective of Indian independence. No Congressman, whether he is a minister or a village worker, can afford to forget this for then he will lose the right perspective which is essential for all of us. To achieve this independence we have to get rid of the new constitution, and so the minister, who functions under this very constitution, will always think in terms of replacing this by another, framed by the Indian people, through a constituent assembly. That thought, though it might not materialise in action for some time, should govern his outlook. The next major step in that direction will come when the attempt is made to thrust federation on us against our declared will. That attempt has to be combated, in the assemblies as well as outside, and we shall use all our strength to prevent this federation from functioning.

Those of us, who have to shoulder the burden of directing national policy and giving a lead to our people, have to think in even wider terms and to look often beyond the frontiers of India. Our own problems have to be seen in relation to international problems, the possibilities of great crises or wars. The Congress has laid down our policy in the event of such crisis developing, and if we are to abide by that policy, as we must, we must ever keep it in mind. The recent despatch of Indian troops to Shanghai is a reminder of how our resources are utilised for protecting imperialist interests. This exploitation of India will continue and grow unless we are vigilant. It might land us, almost unawares, in a war, not of our seeking, but in the interests of the very imperialism which we seek to remove from India. Congressmen must therefore not allow themselves to forget the international implications of what happens in India. Our ministries are not directly concerned with those larger events, but indirectly they may also come in contact with them and might be able to influence them.

The Congress has laid repeated stress on civil liberty and on the right of free expression of opinion, free association and combination, a free press, and freedom of conscience and religion. We have condemned the use of emergency powers and ordinance and special legislation to oppress the Indian people, and have declared in our programme that we shall take all possible steps to end these powers and legislation. The acceptance of office in the provinces does not vary this policy, and indeed much has already been done to give effect to it. Political prisoners have been released, the ban on numerous organisations removed, and

press securities have been returned. It is true that something still remains to be done in this respect, but this is not because of any lack of desire to take further steps on the part of Congress ministries, but because of extraneous difficulties. I trust that it will soon be possible to complete this task and to redeem our pledge in full by the repeal of all repressive and abnormal provincial legislation. Meanwhile the public should remember the peculiar difficulties under which the Congress ministers have to function, and not be overeager to cast the blame on them for something for which they are not responsible.

Civil liberty is not for us merely an airy doctrine or a pious wish but something which we consider essential for the orderly development and progress of a nation. It is the civilized approach to a problem about which people differ, the nonviolent way of dealing with it. To crush a contrary opinion forcibly and allow it no expression, because we dislike it, is essentially of the same genus as cracking the skull of an opponent because we disapprove of him. It does not even possess the virtue of success. The man with the cracked skull might collapse and die, but the suppressed opinion or idea has no such sudden end and it survives and prospers the more it is sought to be crushed with force. History is full of such examples. Long experience has taught us that it is dangerous in the interest of truth to suppress opinions and ideas; it has further taught us that it is foolish to imagine that we can do so. It is far easier to meet an evil in the open and defeat it in fair combat in people's minds, than to drive it underground and have no hold on it or proper approach to it. Evil flourishes far more in the shadows than in the light of day.

But what is good and what is evil may itself be a doubtful matter, and who is then to decide? Governments all over the world are not known to be particularly competent in giving such decisions, and official censors are not an attractive crowd. Yet governments have to shoulder a heavy responsibility and they cannot discuss the philosophy of a question when action is demanded. In our imperfect world we have often to prefer a lesser evil to a greater one.

For us it is not merely a matter of giving effect to a programme to which we have given adherence. Our entire approach to the question must be psychologically different. It cannot be the policeman's approach which has been so characteristic of the British Government in India, the method of force and violence and coercion. Congress ministries should avoid, as far as possible, all coercive processes and should try to win over their critics by their actions and, where possible, by personal contacts. Even if they fail in converting the critic or the opponent, they will make him innocuous, and the public sympathy, which almost invariably goes

to a victim of official action, will no longer be his. They will win the public to their side and thus create an atmosphere which is not favourable to wrong action.

But in spite of this approach and this desire to avoid coercive action, occasions may arise when Congress ministries cannot avoid taking some such action. No government can tolerate the preaching of violence and communal strife, and if this unfortunately takes place, it has to be curbed by having recourse to the coercive processes of the ordinary law. We believe that there should be no police censorship or banning of books and newspapers and the largest freedom should be given to the expression of opinions and ideas. The way we have been cut off from progressive literature from abroad by the policy of the British Government is a public scandal. We must get rid of these bans and censorships and nurture the free soil from which the life of the intellect can grow and the creative faculties can take shape. But still, it must be remembered that there may be exceptional cases of books and newspapers which are so manifestly of an obscene character or promote violence or communal hatred and conflict that some action to check them has to be taken.

A number of political prisoners, convicted for violent activities, have recently been released by the Congress ministries after long terms in prison. They have been welcomed by the public and by Congressmen, and we have been asked if this welcome did not signify an approval of violence. That question reveals an ignorance of public psychology and of the minds of Congressmen. The public and Congressmen alike welcomed them because of the mantle of long suffering that they bore. How many of them had spent their entire youth in prison, how many had faced death without flinching?

They had erred and pursued a wrong path, they had followed a policy injurious to the very cause they sought to serve, but they had paid for it in pain and torment and by long years in solitary cells. They had come to realise that the old policy of theirs was utterly wrong. And so the public welcomed them and friendly faces greeted them wherever they went. Has this not got a lesson for governments who imagine that by suppressing a number of individuals they solve a problem? They succeed thereby in intensifying that very problem, and public sympathy, which might well have been against the individual's deeds, turns to him because of his suffering.

The problem of the political prisoners in the Andamans is with us today and we see the amazing folly of the government in pursuing a policy which is creating a frenzy of excitement among the public. Thus they intensify the very atmosphere which they seek to remove.

The Congress ministries have rightly followed a contrary policy because they try to move with public approval, and seek to win over these brave young men, and create an atmosphere favourable to the working of the Congress programme. In that favourable atmosphere even wrong tendencies will wilt and wither away. Everybody of any consequence in Indian politics knows that terrorism is a thing of the past in India. It would have vanished even earlier but for the policy of the British Government in Bengal. Violence is not killed by violence, but by a different approach and by removing the causes which lead to it.

On these comrades of ours, who have been released after one or two decades of prison life, rests a special responsibility to be loyal to the Congress policy and to work for the fulfilment of the Congress programme. The foundation of that policy is nonviolence and the noble structure of the Congress has been built on that firm foundation. It is necessary that this should be remembered by all Congressmen, for it is even more important today than it has so far been. Loose talk encouraging violence and communal conflict is especially harmful at the present juncture and it might do grave injury to the Congress cause, as well as embarrass the Congress ministries. We are no longer children in politics; we have grown to man's estate and we have big work ahead, big conflicts to face, difficulties to overcome. Let us face them like men with courage and dignity and discipline. Only through a great organisation deriving its sanctions from the masses can we face our problems, and great mass organisations are built up through peaceful methods.

The basic problems of India relate to the peasantry and the industrial workers, and of the two, the agrarian problem is far the most important. The Congress ministries have already begun to tackle this, and executive orders have been passed to bring some temporary relief to the masses. Even this little thing has brought joy and hope to our peasants and they are looking forward eagerly to the greater change to come. There is some danger in this eager expectation of the paradise to come, for there is no immediate paradise in prospect. The Congress ministries, with the best will in the world, are incapable of changing the social order and the present economic system. They are bound down and restricted in a hundred ways and have to move in a narrow orbit. That indeed was, and is, a principal reason for our opposition to this new constitution. We must therefore be perfectly frank with our people and tell them what we can do and what we cannot do under present conditions. That very inability of ours becomes a powerful argument in favour of the vital change which will give us real power.

But meanwhile we have to go as far as we possibly can to give relief to them. We must face this task courageously and not be afraid of vested interests and those who would obstruct us. The real measure of the success of Congress ministries will be the change in the agrarian laws that they bring about and the relief they give to the peasantry. This change in the laws will come from the legislature, but the value of that change will be enhanced if the Congress members of the legislatures keep in close touch with their constituencies and inform the peasantry of their policies.

Congress parties in the legislatures should also keep in touch with Congress committees and with public opinion generally. By this frank approach they will get the friendly cooperation of the public and will be in touch with the realities of the situation. The masses will thus also be trained and disciplined in the democratic method.

A change in the land laws will bring some relief to our peasantry, but our objective is a much bigger one and for that the pre-requisite is the development of the organised strength of the peasantry. Only by their own strength can they ultimately progress or resist the inroads that vested interests might make on them. A boon given from above to a weak peasantry may be taken away later, and even a good law may have little value because it cannot be enforced. The proper organisation of the peasants in Congress committees in villages thus becomes essential.

In regard to the industrial workers, the Congress has not so far developed a detailed programme because the agrarian situation dominates the Indian scene. Some important principles have, however, been laid down in the Karachi resolution and in the election manifesto. Labour's right to form unions and to strike has been recognised and the principle of the living wage approved of. The policy recently outlined by the Bombay Government in respect of industrial workers has the general approval of the Working Committee. This policy is by no means a final policy or an ideal one. But it represents what can be attempted and done under present conditions and within a relatively short period of time. I have no doubt that if this programme is given effect to, it will bring relief to labour and, what is even more important, give it organisational strength. The very basis of this programme and policy is the strengthening of workers' organisations. The Bombay Government declare, in their statement of labour policy, that "they are convinced that no legislative programme can be a substitute for the organised strength of the working class, and till organizations of workers, run on genuine trade union lines, grow up in the various fields of employment, no lasting good can

accrue. Government are therefore anxious to assist in removing real hindrances in the way of the growth of the organisation and to promote collective bargaining between the employers and the employees. Means will be devised to discourage victimisation of workers for connection with a labour organisation and participation in legitimate trade union activity."

With regard to trade disputes, the Bombay Government propose legislation to ensure that no reduction in wages or other change in the conditions of employment to the disadvantage of the workers should take place till they have had sufficient time and opportunity for having the facts and merits of the proposed change examined and all avenues of peaceful settlement of the dispute explored, either through the channel of voluntary negotiation, conciliation or arbitration, or by the machinery of the law. A corresponding obligation would rest on the workers in respect of demands on their behalf. This means that before a trade dispute develops into open conflict there must be an intermediate stage of negotiation or arbitration. It does not mean that there is compulsory arbitration ending in an award which is finally binding on all parties whether they accept it or not.

Compulsory arbitration of this latter kind has always been opposed by labour for it strikes at the root of one of their most cherished rights—the right to strike. They also fear with considerable justification that in such a compulsory proceeding in a capitalist country, the weight of the state is likely to be cast on the side of the employers. And so they would be tied hand and foot, unable to use the only weapon which they possess and which a century of hard struggle has given them. That is not the present proposal for that would be contrary to the Congress policy of recognising the workers' right to strike. That right to strike is fully maintained, but an intermediate stage is provided for to explore avenues of settlement of the dispute. This policy, I am convinced, will be highly to the advantage of all concerned, and especially of labour. Our labour is weak and disorganized and unable to stand up for its rights. The long record of sporadic strikes is a record of almost continuous failure. It is true that even unsuccessful strikes sometimes strengthen the labour movement, but the reverse is still more true, and the present feeble state of our labour movement bears witness to this. For years past labour has been fighting a constant rearguard action against wage-cuts, almost helpless to prevent them. If some such legislation, as is proposed in Bombay, had been in existence, it would have been far more difficult to reduce wages and labour would have been in a much better position to bargain on equal terms with the employers, with probably a friendly public opinion to back it.

The strike is a powerful weapon, the only real weapon of labour. It has to be cherished and preserved and used in an organised and disciplined way with effect when necessity arises. To use it casually and sporadically is to blunt it and thus weaken labour itself. Behind the strike there must be a strong organization and public opinion. This organization seldom develops if there are frequent partial and sporadic strikes which fail.

Organization therefore is the primary need of labour, and all who wish well for labour must help in the building up of strong trade unions. They must remember that any form of violence, whether during a strike or at other times, is injurious to labour's interests. It drives the state into the opposing ranks and provokes far greater violence on the part of the states. It disorganises labour and irritates public opinion. In India it sometimes leads to communal violence which diverts attention immediately from labour's demands. Labour, above everything, cannot afford to be communal or to encourage communalism.

The recent strike[2] in Cawnpore had many lessons to teach us. Much was made in the newspapers of the firing that took place there and I was even misreported as having said that I approved of this firing. As a matter of fact I knew nothing of this firing at the time and I said so. Subsequently I found that this firing was a trivial and individual affair of little significance. An individual had fired in a moment of excitement but had fortunately caused no great injury to anyone. But what is worth noting is that occasional stone-throwing from the crowd was indulged in largely by communal elements who were out for trouble. They did not want a settlement. Even when a settlement was arrived at, these communal elements tried their utmost to upset it and prevent the workers from returning to the mills. Fortunately their influence was not great and the workers' leaders succeeded, after a hard night's work, in explaining the situation to the workers and getting them to resume work. This difficulty would not have arisen if the workers had been properly organised in a trade union.

The lesson, therefore, is: strengthen the organisation and beware of communalism and violence.

The workers and their leaders know well that the Congress ministries are friendly to them and wish to help them in every possible way. Circumstances beyond their control may prevent them today from going as far as they would like to. But, for the first time in its history, the

2. The strike, which had commenced in July 1937, was called off on 9 August following the appointment of a labour enquiry committee under the chairmanship of Rajendra Prasad.

workers' movement has friendly provincial governments in six provinces, and the chance of remedying some of its ills and developing its strength and organisation. They will injure their own cause by embarrassing these governments and withholding their cooperation from them.

Questions have arisen as to the attitude of Congress committees and Congressmen generally towards Congress ministries and the provincial governments where they function. Are they to criticise publicly or only privately or say nothing at all? What should our public activities be now in these six provinces?

It is manifest that the Congress is more important than any ministry. Ministries may come or go, but the Congress goes on till it fulfils its historic mission of achieving national independence for India. That achievement will come, not through ministries, but through the organised strength of the Indian people acting through the Congress. When that achievement comes in full measure the Congress might well cease to exist. Its task will be done. But till then it is the emblem of our strength and unity and national purposes, and we must strengthen it in every way. That strength comes from day to day service of the masses and by developing their initiative and habits of democratic discussion.

It is patent that for a Congress committee to condemn a Congress ministry is both improper and absurd. It is as if one Congress committee condemned another. The ministries, being the creation of the Congress, can be ended at any time by the Congress. If they are not good enough, let us end them or mend them. If we are not prepared to do so, then let us put up with them. Therefore condemnation is out of the question. If we think at any time that they ought to go, then we should take the proper steps under our constitution to bring this about.

On the other hand, for Congress committees and Congressmen to become silent and tongue-tied spectators of the doings of a Congress government would be equally absurd. Vital subjects, like the agrarian problem, will be considered by the legislatures, and all of us are, or should be, interested in these. Congress committees have every right to discuss them and send their suggestions and recommendations and popular demands to the provincial Congress committee concerned. That course should prove helpful both to the legislature and the P.C.C. Friendly criticism or suggestions should always be welcome; it is the friendliness and mode of approach that matter. Any attempt to embarrass the Congress ministries and put difficulties in their way will end in embarrassing ourselves. We are all soldiers in the same cause, comrades in the same great enterprise, and whether we are ministers or village workers, we should deal with each other in a spirit of cooperation

with a desire to help and not to hinder. But we have to be vigilant also and ever alert, and not permit complacency to creep in, deadening our public activities and gradually crushing the spirit of our movement. It is that spirit that counts and the public activity that results from it, for only that can supply the driving force to carry us forward to our goal, and only on that can we base a structure of democratic freedom. The small gains that may come to us will be of little consequence if they come at the cost of that spirit.

We aim at national independence and a democratic state. Democracy is freedom but it is also discipline, and we must therefore develop both the freedom and the discipline of democracy among our people.

40. To S. M. Joshi[1]

Allahabad
August 31, 1937

Dear Comrade,[2]

Your letter of the 27th. I do not know the details of the scheme of village panchayat that the Bombay Government has put forward.[3] So I cannot give an opinion. It is true, as you say, that an official panchayat may come in the way of the development of wider Congress panchayats. There is that risk and yet that risk has to be taken, I think. If we do not take it, somebody else does and he starts village panchayats on an utterly wrong basis. I should like these panchayats to be elected on as wide a basis as possible, possibly adult suffrage, and to be given some criminal and civil powers. Probably they will abuse this and there will be rival parties and the like. That cannot be helped. We have to pass through a stage like that. If these panchayats are formed on a more limited basis, then the Congress panchayat plays an important

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-37/1937, p. 401, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1904); joined the freedom struggle, 1930; founder-member of Congress Socialist Party, 1934; in detention, 1943-46; chief organiser, Rashtra Seva Dal, which was banned 1941-42 and 1947; general secretary, Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, 1956-61; member, Bombay Assembly, 1952-62; chairman, Praja Socialist Party, 1963-64 and of Samyukta Socialist Party, 1964; member, Lok Sabha, 1967-71.
3. The scheme proposed that every village with a population of 2,000 or more should have a village panchayat of elected representatives.

role as representing the popular masses. It will probably capture the official panchayat. I agree with you that we must do nothing to weaken the Congress in the villages or elsewhere. And whether there are official panchayats or not we must have strong village Congress committees, because it is these that will have to function as our organs of struggle. It should be possible for us to keep these going on a mass basis even with the official panchayats. The whole thing depends so much on how it is worked out and what the outlook of the organiser is.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

41. To M. G. Natesa Chettiar[1]

Allahabad
August 31, 1937

Dear Sir,[2]
I am in receipt of your letter of the 27th August sending me a copy of a bill for the abolition of the Partible Permanently Settled Estates in Madras. I am unable to send you any detailed opinion on this subject without a closer study of the problem in Madras. I have no doubt that these big estates in Madras or elsewhere have to be abolished. But the exact manner of doing so deserves careful consideration. Not being conversant with the details of the land system in Madras, I cannot make any specific suggestion at present. Much will depend on the amount to be paid as compensation. It is desirable in any event that these matters should be considered fully.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-76/1937, p. 411, N.M.M.L.
2. Member, Madras Assembly. His bill sought the abolition of partible zamindaris in the Madras Presidency, as they were small holdings.

42. To Prime Minister, U. P. Government[1]

Allahabad
September 6, 1937

Dear Sir,
I am addressing you on the subject of the postal censorship of letters. If it is considered desirable or inevitable to continue this, I have no particular objection. I do not know how far this is a provincial matter or an all-India matter. It is quite possible that this postal censorship is controlled by all-India authorities. For the moment I am not writing to you about the principle of the thing.

My purpose in addressing you is a much more limited and smaller one. If letters have to be opened and regummed, I suggest that at least this should be done efficiently and with the least trouble to the addressee. At the present moment this opening and regumming is carried out in a stupid and clumsy way which almost invariably ends in attaching the letter to the envelope. It is difficult to get it out. Most of my letters, both private and official, come in this way and my colleagues have the same complaint. The postal censors have specialised in a particular kind of dark gum which spoils the envelope and the letter and by itself is not a thing of beauty. If it is possible to introduce a little efficiency and neatness about this unsavoury business, many of us would feel grateful.

I might add that it is a fairly common complaint that letters are not delivered at all and disappear in the post.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Home Department (Political) File No. 32/8/37, National Archives of India.

43. The Congress and the Labour Problem[1]

I have been anxious to meet and address the workers of Bombay because in this city the problem of workers is the most important one and

1. Speech at Bombay, 11 September 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 12 September 1937.

their conditions are fairly bad. The labour question of the city invariably assumes an all-India character.

I have dealings all over the country and the problem of the workers is not as important as the problem of the kisans, if one were to look at it from an all-India point of view. The kisans form the majority of the thirty five crores in India. So long as the problem of the kisans is not solved, it would be difficult to solve the other problems. If there are thousands of unemployed among the workers, there are lakhs among the kisans. In the interest of the workers themselves it is necessary that the kisan problem should be immediately tackled. If that is not solved, it would be like a heavy stone hanging round the neck of the workers.

I come from an agricultural province, where, except in Cawnpore, the acute problem is that of the kisans. There are several difficulties and impediments in political work, but since the acceptance of office by the Congress the difficulties of some Congress leaders have only increased. The Congress stands for Swaraj. It wants a democratic form of government. The power so far in India is in the hands of a few. That was so even before the British came to India. But since the last few years things have begun to change. There are very few countries in the world where the power is in the hands of a few. In Europe the monarchs have been removed but in India, with the advent of the British, the old rajas and maharajas flourish.

For the last several years an agitation has been going on for complete freedom for the country both through the Congress and otherwise. The common people always suffer if the political power is in the hands of a few, whether they are British or Indian. But if there is a real democratic system of government, no one suffers as the power is in the hands of the people in general. That is real Swaraj. Hence India can be said to have attained Swaraj only when the British control is removed from India. For that it is necessary to struggle, and for carrying on that struggle strength is a necessity which cannot be had by sitting quiet. For example, strike is a weapon of the workers against the oppression of the employers. If the strike is an organised and united one, the workers would succeed; if not, it might end in failure. The question now is that the people should have both strength and organisation. That is not an easy thing to achieve. If it is difficult to organise and unite all the workers of Bombay, then one can imagine the difficulty in organising and uniting thirty five crores of Indians. The Indian National Congress, which was at first in the hands of a few in the upper strata of society, has slowly spread its organisation and has today reached the masses of the country. After the advent of Mahatma Gandhi, the kisans began to take interest in the Congress and the

Congress through their strength is able to fight British imperialism which is feared by many nations. This is no small achievement. This conflict may not have brought any result but it has most certainly increased the strength and organisation of the people of the country.

One cannot achieve freedom in instalments. What is got by instalments cannot be called Swaraj. In a country there cannot be two powers ruling at the same time. It is either one power or the other that is ruling and not both. One might be fighting for the country's freedom, one might have reached the very foot of the fort that is to be captured, yet one cannot say that the fort has been captured. As a matter of fact, the heaviest and the most intense fighting takes place just then.

The Congress has decided to accept office and Congress ministries are functioning in some provinces. But the British rule in India continues to be there. For example, the Congress ministers cannot issue any orders to the army which is still under the control of the British and the army is everything for a country. Then, again, there is the civil service over which the ministry has no control. The salaries of the civil servants cannot be touched. What the Congress ministries can do are odd bits here and there. The problem of poverty and attainment of freedom is still there. The Government of India is such that the real power is still in the hands of the foreigners. The Congress has decided to resist the federal part of the Government of India Act as it is worse than the provincial part of the scheme.

For the common people it is a bit difficult to understand the position of the Congress after its acceptance of office. I am not surprised at the difficulty as I myself have been feeling the peculiarity of the situation. I do not know how all this is going to end. The Congress is in a way responsible for the Congress ministries in seven provinces and has to face accusations of not having done this or that. This is the reason why myself and some others were opposed to acceptance of office. But it was thought that the Congress ministers might help the people and do some odd bits here and there and strengthen the organisation. Congress ministers can remain in their present position only so long as they are able to do at least a little towards the betterment of the conditions of the people. The moment it is found that they can do nothing useful they will have to vacate those places. But the question of how long they should remain and when they should come out is not an easy one. They have been there for the last two months and I think many things that we wished for have not been done.

But one fact has to be recognised. The whole atmosphere has changed, the people have gained strength and the organisational work also has increased since the Congress ministries came into existence. For

example, in the United Provinces the Congress ministry, which proposed to bring in some legislation to relieve the burden of taxation and indebtedness of the kisans, has issued orders that no prosecutions should be launched against the kisans till the legislation is passed. This does not mean that all their difficulties have been removed, but they certainly have been lessened. Who knows what will happen to the ministers? They were in jail some time ago and they might again be there some time later. They have accepted office under the orders of the Congress so that the people may gain strength for a bigger conflict with British imperialism.

I think that either the ministers would have to tolerate the interference for some time or break off immediately. If on a really big issue there is a conflict between the ministers and the Governor, then they will have to resign and go back to their old field of work. But, if in the meantime something can be done for the people, it should not be missed. Ministers cannot be expected to come and explain to the public what happens in the secretariat or between them and the Governor. It is a peculiar situation. Some people think that the Congress ministers are not making the necessary efforts to get this or that done. The ministers and a few others might be aware that attempts are being made, but they cannot come out and say what is happening till it is decided one way or the other.

I am the President of the Congress. I receive several complaints about the working of the Congress committees. Immediately I come to know about such things, I do not mention anything to the public, but I write to them first, then meet and discuss with them. The Congress ministers are there because the Congress has asked them to accept office. They will come out when they are asked to do so. For example, none of them accepted office till the Congress decided to accept office, though they were invited to form the ministries. I understand the difficulties in the way of the ministers. After all, they have to work with the same old machinery. The system is the same though the ministers are different. If the whole outlook has to be changed, it is essential to change the whole system and that can be done only when there is Swaraj. The Congress is the only organisation in the country which can fight the British Government. It contains men and groups who differ in ideas. The conditions of the workers cannot be changed to a desirable extent till the whole system of society undergoes a change. It is therefore necessary that the workers themselves should make efforts and strengthen their own organisational power.

The *communique* issued by the Bombay Government on the policy that they intend to follow regarding labour disputes shows that it is a

good one and there should be no objection to it. It after all retains the right of the workers to strike. The government only wants that a settlement, if possible, should be arrived at before any drastic action is taken by either side and the medium proposed is arbitration. As a matter of fact, the labour policy of the Government of Bombay will make the employers think many times before they decide upon a wage cut.

The Congress has declared that it will release all political prisoners, remove all restrictions and bans. It looks bad that it should not have done so even after two months of the assumption of office. It looks as if it has not kept up the promises it has given. The matter is small but the principle involved is really big. The Congress has not forgotten the promises it has made. Let it be clearly understood that the promises have not been fulfilled so far not for want of anxiety on the part of the Congress ministers but because there are difficulties in the way. There are three ways out of the difficulty. Either they try and get the things done or resign or come before the Working Committee or the All India Congress Committee and place all the facts and ask for advice. I am confident that one of the three things will be done very soon. But one cannot expect things to be made public during the negotiation stage as it would make matters worse. The constitution and the rules of the government are such that it takes a considerably long time before anything can be done.

There should be some legislation to restrict the hours of work of the workers and clerks in mercantile organisations. I have also explained the position of the Congress ministry in regard to non-removal of bans and restrictions. The B.P.C.C. had unanimously decided upon a resolution asking for the removal of all bans and restrictions on labour organisations and their leaders. There should be no restriction on expression of views, though no government can tolerate preaching of violence. In my view, preaching of Marxist views also should not be restricted. There should be freedom of thought and speech.

44. The Need for Public Cooperation[1]

Today we have Congress ministries in most of the provinces, and if the ministries are there, it is not due to any individual effort on anyone's part,

1. Speech at Bombay, 12 September 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 13 September 1937.

but it is the result of the strength and organisation of the Indian people. It is for them, therefore, to see that the work of the Congress ministries is directed towards the furtherance of their main objective. Ministry or no ministry, the goal of the Congress is the achievement of self-government and all Congress work should be directed towards the furtherance of that goal.

If the Congress ministries acquit themselves creditably, it would be on account of the people's strength behind them. If they fail to achieve anything it would not be their fault but that of the people, for the ministries have the backing and strength of the organisation of the Congress behind them and they speak and act with that strength and support.. The success or failure of their work depends on how far they have helped in building up and strengthening the vast Congress organisation and how far they have led it towards the goal of independence.

I have moved during the last election among millions of people and addressed hundreds of meetings, and I have done it with the sole objective of delivering the message of the Congress to thousands of homes. The election campaign was only a part of the Congress programme. The strength of the Congress lies in its work among the masses, and in so far as it can reflect the mind of the masses, it is the representative body it has become today. If the Congress Working Committee speaks with authority and asks them to do certain things, it is doing so with the awareness that it is reflecting the mind of the people.

How has the Congress developed that strength and prestige? The claim of the Congress to be the only representative body in India is based on solid work. During the two decades of constant and frequent trials of strength against the mightiest power of the world, the Congress has removed the inertia of the people, roused their conscience and made them imbibe the spirit of service and sacrifice which alone can take them nearer to the goal of independence. A hundred and fifty years of foreign domination has eaten up their vitals and it is no small measure of achievement to awaken the political consciousness among them. Today the whole of India is politically alert and has stood the trials of the struggle against the government. That is why the Congress can today claim to talk in the name of the people of India. We cannot afford to lose this. We must keep the organisation and training intact whatever line of action we may adopt.

If the Congress has formed ministries in the provinces, it is with the definite object of ending that objectionable feature of the new constitution, the federation, which gives the princes a very prominent place in shaping the destinies of the nation. These feudal overlords, with their strong position in the new federation, can in no way be of any help to

India's ultimate objective. With a proper perspective and clear ideology we are sure to succeed in our efforts at putting an end to the scheme of federation.

The Congress ministers have a very difficult task ahead of them. There are so many schemes which have to be implemented and which require finance. Yet, the major part of the provincial and central finances is being taken away by the military and the services. However, we have to ensure that this new move of office acceptance leads us towards our goal and also helps us in strengthening our organisation. In the circumstances, we should realise that it serves no useful purpose to criticise the ministers. We should remember that the Congress ministries have undertaken a heavy responsibility and with the cooperation of the public will acquit themselves creditably and justify the trust reposed in them. The demands and grievances of the public should be placed before them in a friendly way and the Congress committees would be willing to do their part in the matter.

Outside India we find a different trend altogether. Bombs and cannons are today busy suppressing the revolutionary urge in different parts of the world. In the Far East, Japan is out to crush China. We cannot keep our eyes shut to these incidents as these have a lesson for us also. Besides, we should see that our country is not made a party in any way in this struggle. Against our own desire, India's men and materials should not be used abroad in the name of the people of India as has been done recently under the pretext of safeguarding Indian interests in China. All these problems demand constant vigilance backed by the strength of organised public opinion. This the Congress alone can do and that is why our efforts should be directed towards the strengthening of this great body which can legitimately speak in the name of the people.

45. Interview to Congress Workers at Ahmedabad[1]

Question: Why did you send your daughter to a foreign country for education?

Jawaharlal Nehru: It is advantageous to study the world from outside at present. Other countries like Britain, France, Germany, Russia are

1. 19 September 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 21 September 1937.

sending their students to foreign countries. If India becomes free I will send students to foreign countries at national cost.

Q: Do you not think there is a need for changing the Bombay ministry as it has been unable to release political prisoners?

JN: It is impossible to expect the Congress ministers to carry out the Congress programme immediately. We should cooperate with the Congress ministries and strengthen their hands; we shall recall the ministers if they cannot do anything, but they are our men, and we should not weaken them by publicly criticising them.

There are difficulties about the release of political prisoners as men forget their political object while committing a crime and subsequently declare themselves political prisoners.

When the ministers are negotiating with the Governor in this matter we should also have patience. The ministers will make a public declaration if they fail in these negotiations.

Q: Is it in order to form the Socialist Party within the Congress?

JN: I am a believer in socialism and an admirer of the new world which Russia has created, but our present aim is political freedom without which we cannot do anything. As to the forming of the Congress Socialist Party, I think any party can be established within the Congress and it can propagate its principles; but we should not fight among ourselves.

I earnestly appeal to the people of Gujarat to make the next Congress session a success and establish Congress committees in every village.

46. To the Mill Workers of Kanpur[1]

Dear Comrades,

For some time past there has been considerable excitement in Cawnpore. Sometimes there is a strike, sometimes the millowners close the

1. This was a letter written in Hindi and was first published in *Pratap*, a Hindi newspaper of Kanpur. Its English rendering was published in *The Leader* of 27 September 1937 under the dateline, Kanpur, 23 September. The Hindi text is not available.

mills and at other times some workers are dismissed which leads to trouble. This question, however, is not one which affects Cawnpore alone; its impact is being felt all over the province. And this is right because the problem of the workers and the question of their welfare is one which should affect everybody. I regret I could not come myself and take part in it. I have been touring about all over India as part of the heavy responsibility that lies on the country falls on me; and questions relating to the workers and peasants are cropping up everywhere. But wherever I went, Cawnpore was always in my mind and I was always anxious to get news about the labour trouble. I hope to be present among you soon and whatever help I can give you I shall give.

The problem of Cawnpore workers is a difficult one. But we should not forget that Cawnpore labourers number only 50,000 out of a total population of 50 millions in this province; and then millions of people form the peasantry. Therefore unless the problem of the peasantry is solved, we cannot drive out poverty and distress from the country. It is true that there is a close affinity between the problems of the peasants and the workers. If the former are in a sad plight, it would be difficult for the latter to improve their lot. After all, it is from the peasantry that most of the workers come, and a very large number among the peasants remain idle. That is why whenever there is a strike there are any number of peasants available to take the place of the strikers and the strike falls through. However strong may be the workers' organization, poverty and unemployment among the peasants are bound to act as a deadweight. Therefore it is essential to improve the lot of both as otherwise neither would be able to benefit much. This is the basic truth about the whole country and specially about our province which is predominantly agricultural. Only Cawnpore, which is an industrial centre, has a large labour population.

All these factors will have to be kept in mind by the provincial government. The workers should also remember them or they would fail to grasp the real significance of the situation and would never realize their weakness or their strength. It is only recently that the Congress ministries have come into power. They are trying to serve the people as much as they can by working along the lines of the Congress principles. You should not, however, forget that the real power is not in the hands of the ministries, and in many matters they are greatly fettered. The British Government is still functioning in our country and Swaraj is as yet a long way off. You must have noticed that the Congress ministry has full sympathy for you and has also tried to help you. But you should not forget its limitations. It cannot do things beyond its power, and if you try that it should do so, it might result in harm.

There is a sort of a tussle always going on between the workers and the millowners. Both see to their own advantage and it may be that their interests clash. Whichever is the stronger party will pull the weaker. Ultimately, we think that this tussle will end only when the workers get full compensation for their labour and when all the large concerns in the country are owned by the people. But this is a thing which cannot take place in a single city. It must take place in the whole country. Before this could happen it is essential that the government of the country must pass into the hands of the people. This is what is known as Swaraj. It is for this that the Congress has been fighting for so many years and has now been able to achieve some success. When we achieve Swaraj the way will be open to us and we shall manage our mills and factories and our land just as we want. But not till then.

I have referred to the constant tussle between the workers and the millowners. I am convinced that the greater the strength of the workers the better would they be able to improve their lot. But in what does this strength lie? It lies in organization. The first thing, therefore, that the workers should do is to organize a mazdur sabha or a trade union. Without this they will always remain weak. You all know that for long the Cawnpore mazdur sabha remained a weak body. As a result the workers also lacked strength. Today, the mazdur sabha is strong and it does not insist on swelling the membership. But many other things are necessary for it and if it lacks strength, as it often happens, it may lose in a fight and suffer loss. Perhaps you have all heard that ten years ago there was a large organization of workers in Bombay.[2] Due to frequent strikes that organization grew weak and has not been able to recover completely. If it had not supported those frequent strikes, it would have consolidated itself and would have been today a most powerful organization. What is true of Bombay is also true elsewhere. The difficulty is that the workers are so impatient that if they acquire a little strength they think they can achieve everything. They forget that powerful forces are operating against them which they cannot successfully fight. The result is that they lose, and then they get discouraged, grow weak, and all their enthusiasm ebbs away. We should always measure our strength and go only as far as we can. There we should stop and gather more strength and then again march forward.

I am stressing these basic things so that you should all ponder over them seriously and then decide. I find that you have gained in strength

2. The large membership which the Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union had in 1929 had fallen considerably by 1930.

and are full of enthusiasm. But I am afraid you may do certain things which may weaken you and all enthusiasm may then cool down. There is a danger of being involved in trivialities and forgetting the essential matters.

After all, how is it that you have gained strength? There is a new feeling in the air due to the Congress success and the coming into power of the Congress ministry. Since then a change has taken place in the relations between the people and the government. This has also been realized by the millowners and their attitude towards you has changed. Many of your demands were conceded by them and to consider your basic demands a committee of inquiry was set up. All these things naturally helped in increasing your strength and you got an opportunity to improve your condition. You have now to seize this moment and get the maximum out of it. A single false step on your part might mean that you may lose the opportunity and then who knows when it may come again? Do not forget that if you adopt wrong tactics then even the provincial government will not be able to help you.

The first thing that you have to do now is to strengthen the mazdur sabha and organize yourselves. Secondly, you must make all necessary preparations for the inquiry committee. If you get yourself entangled in small matters and are not fully equipped, the committee will not be able to give a proper decision. The millowners will be ready with all the material and will argue their case very well but you will not be able to do so. And if you continue to be involved in side-issues and the inquiry committee, as a consequence, is not able to function, then there is the risk of your spoiling the case.

It is said that the millowners did not observe the terms of the settlement. I am, of course, not aware of the situation at Cawnpore but this is likely. Even then the question arises: what are you going to do? Should you, in a moment of excitement, stray away from the right path and forget it? If you do so, it would not be wisdom and you will suffer. Of course this will please your enemies.

After a hundred years' constant struggle, at last the workers have achieved two of their objectives. One is the right to form a trade union and the other is the right to strike. The workers cannot forego these two rights, as without them they would be powerless and weak. But the weapon of strike is such that it should be used only on special occasions. It loses its edge if it is resorted to too frequently. Workers should have recourse to strike only when all other avenues have been exhausted, and the mazdur sabha, after much deliberation, decides to do so. If the strike is to take place at the instance of one single individual or a group, how can you have any organization? And if

this were to happen every day what effect would it produce? Either it would result in the millowners declaring a lock-out making the workers to starve after some time, or the millowners, finding that no settlement was possible, might put up a stubborn resistance. How long would the workers in that case be able to continue the strike? In such a case it is also likely that the workers may forfeit public sympathy without which they cannot expect to succeed. You all know to what extent the Congress and the Cawnpore public have helped you, and without that help you could not have done much.

It is often complained that the millowners try to rid themselves of such workers who take particular interest in the mazdur sabhas. This complaint is probably true and the millowners resort to such practices in every country. The workers have also been opposing it everywhere because if this practice is not checked the workers cannot organize themselves. But at the same time the right to dismiss a worker who does not do his work well should be conceded to the mill manager. No one should question this right. No institution or mill can function properly without discipline. Wherever the trade unions are well organized, whether it is in Russia or in England, this holds good. It is not desirable for everyone to interfere in a matter relating to the retention in service of any particular worker. But where the mazdur sabha feels that injustice has been done to a particular worker, it should have the right to bring the case to the notice of the public, and, if necessary, hold an inquiry. In such matters, if some principle is involved, recourse may even be had to a strike. This should, however, be done after giving due notice and where there is no other way open for redress. Any show of impatience can only make matters worse and the workers may be involved in unnecessary strikes and difficulties. Therefore when such incidents happen there should be a protest, followed by an inquiry, and whatever is possible under the circumstances should be done, and then, if need be, the mazdur sabha should meet and deliberate what to do next. Generally, this is how the workers should act. But at Cawnpore, in the present circumstances nothing should be done to precipitate matters as it might prove harmful. Perhaps the inquiry committee itself will decide about the steps to be taken if a worker has been illegally dismissed. Some solution, legal or otherwise, of this question must be found out. It is necessary for the workers to collect all relevant material on this point to be laid before the inquiry committee.

The workers should not forget that, after all, their wages are paid out of the profits made by the mills and factories. If the work in a mill is bad, production is less, then the margin of profit is also proportionately reduced. In such circumstances either the mill will have to close

down or much of its burden will fall on the workers. Whatever, therefore, is injurious to the working of a mill ultimately proves detrimental to the interests of the workers. In England the workers get much higher wages than in India because they work more and their output is also much better. Therefore, it becomes easier to pay them higher wages and to provide them with many other amenities. You should not do anything which might interfere with the smooth working of the mill or cause any obstruction. When you are compelled to go on a strike then all should join it, but before that all efforts should be made to solve the issue and other interests should not be allowed to interfere.

I would like to draw the attention of the workers particularly to one thing because I feel that without it they cannot make much progress. In our work and in our organization we can achieve better results if we are nonviolent and peaceful. There are people who believe that they can terrorise and browbeat others and force them to concede their demands by threats or by violence. Such people are living in a fool's paradise and are completely deluded. If violence is resorted to, it cannot be expected that the government will not interfere and the army or the police will not be called. The workers should remember that the government is very powerful and will put down violence by violence and that the workers will be subdued in no time. This will have a very bad effect on the workers' organization as a whole. It will become weak and the attention of the public will be diverted from the reasonable demands of the workers to their quarrels.

You all know the nature of the fight the Congress had to wage against the government during the last seventeen years, and how a strong organization has been built up in the country. From the Himalayas to the Cape Comorin, in every village and town, the power and influence of the Congress have been felt. All this has been achieved by nonviolent methods and not through brickbats, lathis or guns. Without overlooking the principles, you should see what can be done in the present circumstances to strengthen your power. All sensible people in India know that we can fight our battle of freedom only in this nonviolent and peaceful manner and it is in this way that we can organize and make ourselves strong. All other methods are childish and betray ignorance of our present circumstances and world conditions. You cannot organize the masses except through peaceful means and a strike which is accompanied by violence can never succeed. You must grasp all these things well because your success or failure will depend on them. The Congress has always helped you and will continue to help you, but the Congress cannot cooperate with you if violence is resorted to. This will lead to a parting of ways.

I have addressed to you a very long letter. Most of the night was passed in writing and now the day is about to dawn. I wanted to give expression to my feelings. My feelings about Cawnpore are mixed ones. I rejoice to think that you have gained in strength, but at the same time I grow anxious lest you should take a false step, and all this enthusiasm might die down and whatever little you have gained might also disappear. If you follow the right path and stick to it, then you will gain in strength and the condition of Cawnpore workers will also improve. Everything, therefore, depends on you. All that we can do is to give you advice or help, but it is for you to do the work, and the success or failure depends on you. I have deliberately avoided mentioning the millowners and their shortcomings at length. I am addressing this letter only to you, and it is to you, therefore, that I appeal. It is not the mistakes or faults of others that harm us but we suffer due to our own faults and mistakes. I have told you to organize yourself for therein lies your strength. You should not forget that only recently the millowners, after seeing your organized strength, have formed an employers' association. You have yet to encounter great difficulties and you have a long way to go. Do not allow yourself to be deluded into the belief that you have already reached the goal.

Your brother,
Jawaharlal Nehru

47. To Vallabhbhai Patel[1]

Lucknow
September 23, 1937

My dear Vallabhbhai,
Your telegram has come here as I have been delayed in Lucknow. I shall wire to you in reply from Allahabad tomorrow after consulting Kripalani. But I want to put before you how very difficult it is for me to go back to Gujarat early in October. The Cawnpore situation[2] is very grave and it may lead to serious consequences. The agrarian situation

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-10(i)/1937, p. 67, N.M.M.L.
2. In Kanpur labour troubles continued in the mills, some of which resorted to lock-outs.

here is also serious.[3] Our province is in a state of ferment for various reasons and all manner of difficulties are arising which have to be handled quickly. Then so much accumulation of work here. I feel awfully tired and repeated long journeys by train are exhausting. However I shall consult Kripalani and wire to you from Allahabad tomorrow.

I have your letter of the 19th. I note the rough figures you mention about collections. As for the general collections for Congress purposes, certainly you should keep the major portion in Gujarat. But it is customary for a proportion of my tour collections to go to the A.I.C.C. funds. I hope you will agree to this. What this proportion should be I should like to have your advice about. 25% seems to me fair.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. On 1 September 1937, observed as kisan day, a resolution was passed in hundreds of villages in U.P. demanding the abolition of the zamindari system. This led to the harassment of Congress workers by the zamindars.

48. The Peasant Problem[1]

The outstanding problem of India is the peasant problem. All else are secondary. Unless we can give substantial relief to the peasantry and remove their burdens all our other activities are of little avail. The coming of the Congress ministries has given new hope and new life to our peasantry. On the other hand, the big zamindars and taluqdars, specially in Bihar and the United Provinces, are organising to resist this long deferred justice to the peasantry. We see here the class struggle in action not on the side of the peasantry so much but on the part of the big zamindars. But we must not be diverted from our path. We must remain true to our pledges and give satisfaction and fulfilment to the hopes of the peasantry.

1. Message sent on 27 September 1937 to *Arjun*, a Hindi newspaper published from Delhi. A.I.C.C. File No. P-9/1937, p. 201, N.M.M.L.

49. To Srikrishna Sinha[1]

Allahabad
September 28, 1937

Dear Srikrishna Babu,

Some time back I sent you a telegram from Wardha expressing my surprise at the amendments to the constituent assembly resolution accepted in Bihar.[2] I requested you to send me some details. I have not received any so far. I shall be glad if you will let me know exactly what happened. The Bihar resolution has made it difficult for us in other provinces and it is undesirable to have differing resolutions passed in the various legislatures.

Newspapers report tearing down of the national flag in a college at Muzaffarpur. This kind of thing has happened, I believe, previously also. I do not know what the exact facts are. But Congressmen are put out by this kind of thing and I shall be grateful if you will take some action in the matter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-72/1937, p. 11, N.M.M.L.
2. While debating the constituent assembly resolution, the Bihar Government accepted an amendment for protecting the minority communities whose representation in the constituent assembly would be on a separate electorate basis.

50. To C. Rajagopalachari[1]

Allahabad
October 1, 1937

My dear Rajagopalachari,

I have been astonished to learn that a circular letter has been issued, under your direction, by the secretary of the Madras legislature Congress

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P.L.-3/1937 (Pt. II), p. 279, N.M.M.L.

Party.[2] This circular raises important issues of principle and practice and I have therefore written on the subject to the secretary of that party as well as to the provincial Congress committee. I enclose a copy of the letter[3] sent to the party secretary.

Apart from the intrinsic importance of this matter we have to consider it in another aspect. Is the Congress organisation going to become a camp follower of the government carrying out directions issued by the local government, or is it to retain its independence? Obviously there must be the fullest cooperation between a Congress ministry and the government and a provincial Congress committee. But it seems to me that not only the P.C.C. must continue to function independently but should also take the initiative in Congress matters. It is open to the P.C.C. to make recommendations to the government and to carry on such agitational or other activities as it thinks desirable. The government as such should not interfere with the activities of the P.C.C., though of course individual members of it have every right, as members of the P.C.C., to give advice and help in shaping policy. Congressmen should feel that the provincial Congress committee is a more vital organ of theirs than the provincial government. The provincial government may have to resign but the P.C.C. goes on.[4]

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. A circular letter of the Congress Party in the Madras Assembly directed the Congress committees in the Madras Presidency not to enrol employees of local bodies as Congress members as that would constitute a violation of official rules.
3. Not printed.
4. C. Rajagopalachari in his reply wrote: "The fight here is between the Justice Party and the Congress. It would lead to utter demoralisation if the services under local bodies took sides. It was impossible conscientiously to permit the employees of the local boards, therefore, to become members of the Congress Party simply because we were in office. It would be a scandal. . . ."

51. On the Working of the Congress Ministries[1]

The last meeting of the A.I.C.C. was held in Delhi six or seven months ago. At that meeting, among other important subjects, the most important was the one which related to office acceptance. The country had been agitated over that issue for long. There were different points of view. Eventually it was decided by the Working Committee to accept office provided we were assured that the Governors would not interfere with the constitutional activities of the ministers. Then we did not get all we wanted. After some exchange of views through press statements between the Congress leaders and the authorities concerned, both in England and India, the Working Committee decided to authorise the Congress representatives to accept the responsibilities of office in the six provinces in which the Congress Party was in majority. Since then the Congress has also formed the ministry in the North West Frontier Province. This decision of the Working Committee was not in full consonance with the Delhi formula put forward by the A.I.C.C.,[2] and as such it will be placed before you for ratification.

My personal view was against office acceptance and so with your permission I want to give my views on the new experiment after it has been worked for the last few months. In my opinion, office acceptance has benefited us. The country is pulsating with a new life and new vision. As Congress President I go about in different parts of the country, and as such have ample opportunities of seeing and feeling how the kisans, peasants, labourers and traders are feeling as a result of the new experiment. Wherever Congress governments have been established, people are heaving a sigh of relief. But we have to see how far we have advanced towards our real objective or whether some weaknesses have entered into our scheme of things. As regards the work of the Congress ministers, my own idea is that they have done a lot of good. In doing a lot of little good things they might forget the bigger objective. Good work is good in itself and interests us. But sometimes it also diverts our attention from the really big issues. I do not say that this

1. Speech at the A.I.C.C. session in Calcutta, 29 October 1937. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika,* 30 October 1937, and *The Hindustan Times,* 30 October 1937.
2. See pp. 69 and 105.

has been the case. But there is always the danger. It is up to this House to be vigilant and save us from that danger.

The Congress ministers are in very great difficulty. So far our life has been a life of struggle against the British raj and as such it has been an agitational life. That struggle is still with us, and will continue till complete independence is achieved. But with new changes, new responsibilities have devolved upon us. Ministers are our own men and are members of the A.I.C.C.

I want to tell you what I feel in my heart of hearts. May be you also feel like me, with the only difference that I have opportunities of knowing more things than you have. We are all anxious and restless to get out of slavery and to be free. Unfortunately, in our country so many problems have got to be solved, due to the folly and indifference of our rulers who have allowed most essential problems to be accumulated. At times, I feel upset that our pace in the matter of improving the lot of the masses has been slow so far. I do not criticise our ministers. I feel sympathy for them in the uphill task that confronts them. But this does not mean that people who still find their lot not improved appreciably should not voice their grievances. Our masses have been oppressed, suppressed and downtrodden for ages past. They could not speak about or discuss the matters which affected their interests adversely. It is the Congress which created and fostered the democratic spirit in them with the result that they have now started to feel and agitate about their grievances. This is a necessary concomitant of the spirit of democracy which has been inculcated by the Congress. That spirit has to be encouraged, strengthened and used on the right lines. That being so, it would be wrong to suggest that the Congress ministers should not be criticised and that the people should keep tongue-tied. If that were so, why did we assemble here? But having said all this, I feel that there should be a proper appreciation of the handicaps that our Congress ministers have got to labour under in the initial stages and that every criticism should be based on weighty reasons and must be of a constructive nature. Criticise the Congress ministers you must whenever there is sufficient justification for it. They are your creatures. Today, if you so desire, they will come out. They are there not at the sweet will and pleasure of the Governor. They owe allegiance to you and the Congress organisation. If this view is taken, then your criticism should prove helpful and friendly because it would be done with the desire to strengthen their hands and not to weaken them.

Our workers have been talking a lot about the Muslim mass contact move on the part of the Congress. There is a lot of misconception

about it. We do not, in our calculations and scheme of things, discriminate between Hindus and Muslims as such. Our mass contact move has succeeded beyond the most optimistic calculations, so much so that today the Congress claims a far larger number of Muslims in its fold than the Muslim League can do. Only recently a vigorous attack was launched on the Congress by Mr. Jinnah's Muslim League at Lucknow. But we need not worry about such baseless insinuations. A few days ago at Bijnor, there had been a straight contest between the Congress and the League, and you will hear shortly that the Congress nominee has succeeded with a thumping majority.

Fortunately, we meet here in this province of Bengal which has got a tremendous record in our political life, a record of great sacrifice, a province which has been in the forefront of our national struggle for all these generations. Yet it is our misfortune that you are not sharers in the freer atmosphere and feeling of exhilaration that the Congress ministries have brought in other provinces. You have yet to put up with the old ways of repression. You have the same old heavy atmosphere. You have yet to think of problems, which in other provinces are past problems, where they can now face newer problems. But you have to spend yet so much of your energy on the problems of repression, of detenus and political prisoners, banning of Congress organisations in Midnapore and Chittagong, and so many things. You are oppressed and naturally your major problem is still how to get out of these.

I wish to assure you that in those provinces where the Congress ministries are functioning there is no forgetting of what is happening in Bengal. There is anxious realisation of this state of affairs and a deep-seated desire to do something which might be of help to you because obviously we hang together.

It may be that the British Government, while introducing provincial autonomy, sought to increase provincialism, to introduce differences between various provinces, so that they may not engage themselves so much in the problems of all India. Be that as it may, we have certainly based our national movement on the fullest and completest freedom of India, and it is inconceivable that we would think of half a dozen provinces and forget the rest. It is impossible. If Bengal is pulled down, the whole of India is pulled down, the rest of India is pulled down for the time being. One affects the other. We cannot consider these problems in isolation and, therefore, the problems that are worrying Bengal are not the problems of Bengal but the problems of India, in which the whole of India has not merely an academic interest but a live interest. I hope that desire will bear fruit.

I hope you have seen in today's paper a statement issued by the Working Committee in regard to the *Bande Mataram* song.[3] You must have seen, in some of the newspapers, big headlines expressing resentment at the Working Committee's statement. I want to tell you, first of all, that this statement was drawn up by the Working Committee after most anxious and prolonged thought and after consultation with a large number of people that we could get into touch with.

I want to tell you that we did not consider this matter in Calcutta only but for weeks past we had been considering this matter by correspondence and otherwise, by consultation specially with leading friends in Bengal and elsewhere.

Why did we consider it? Not because objection was taken to it by some—the Congress is strong enough to fight that objection—but because having carefully examined it we felt that in regard to one or two matters, legitimate objections might be taken. We have to consider it from an all-India point of view, because we are the All India Congress. We cannot think in terms of provincial groups or religious sections. We have to look at it from an all-India point of view. There are certain words in it which certainly can be taken objection to by some. If so, we have no sufficient answer to give to those who object. We do not very much mind the objections of some people who do it just for the sake of it. But we wanted to consider this problem purely rationally.

Therefore the first thing I wish you to realise is that this was done after most careful consideration—and in a small way after months of consideration—and certainly after some days of intensive thought and consideration. Nothing was done rapidly or in a hurry. Of course long consideration does not justify a false or wrong act.

But I want you to read carefully the statement that the Working Committee has issued and I beg of the editors and leader-writers of newspapers to read it very carefully, because I feel that the statement reached many of the newspapers in the small hours of this morning. When they got it probably they did not have much time to read it carefully, and I do say—not in a spirit of challenge—that there is not a single word in the statement to which anybody can take any objection.

You will see that the major part of the statement is meant to be placed before the public—and we are thinking in terms of all India, not merely the public of Calcutta or of Bengal, but thirty five crores of India. We have to deal with a large number of people who do not know the background of the *Bande Mataram* song. They have heard it and they

3. See p. 236.

have liked it and a sentiment has grown round it. Few know how it arose and when it arose. Because of this ignorance of the background many honest misconceptions have arisen about it.

You will see that three-fourths or more than half of the statement shows the tremendous significance of the *Bande Mataram* song in the national movement and national life of India. We have tried to show how it has become a part of our national life which it is impossible for any resolution of anybody to take out. For the first time in the Congress history we have dealt with this song more or less officially. It had never been done before—in spite of the tremendous sentiment and reverence that have grown up—so far as I know, by the A.I.C.C. and much less by the Congress; so that for the first time we have recognised officially the place of the *Bande Mataram* song, which has been used so often. The *Bande Mataram* song, really speaking, has now become a far greater part of our national movement than it was at any time before. At the same time we have tried to point out that a part of the song, the first two stanzas, are such that it is impossible for anyone to take objection to, unless he is maliciously inclined. We have recognised that in the rest of the song there is ideology, imagery, allegory, etc., which people of various groups cannot put up with. Remember, we are thinking in terms of a national song for all India. Therefore if there is an ideology which various groups in India cannot honestly and sincerely accept, then it is an improper ideology for a national song.

I, for myself, cannot really enthuse over an ideology, Hindu or Muslim. As soon as the ideology comes, I forget *Bande Mataram*. People's mind is diverted to other thoughts and it introduces a sense of confusion in their minds, since their attention is diverted to allegories, phraseologies and ideologies which do not suit other people. The latter part of the song is seldom used in the rest of India. We have in our statement recognised the existing practice and at the same time removed certain misapprehensions which were justified. I think the Working Committee's statement is a good statement and a right statement. To all our friends, who have seen some danger in it, I say that there is no danger in it and it is not disparagement of the song that has grown up in our national movement.

52. On the Congress Attitude to Sedition[1]

Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code has been referred to, and it has been said that the repeal of the sedition section has been the objective of the Congress. Many of us have taken some pride in stating before the courts of law that we are seditious, that we intend to be seditious, and that we shall be seditious. So it would be perfectly absurd for anyone connected with the Congress to take any action for sedition as such. But I do not think that this House, however much it may desire, can say or lay down that under no possible circumstances can a Congress ministry or any other ministry refuse to take action against any individual. We can easily imagine circumstances in which the state, constituted as at present, is forced to take action in the case of violence against the state or in the case of communal violence which sometimes occurs in this country. So we should be clear about this when we say that no Congress ministry has any business to launch prosecution for sedition. We cannot say straightway that even when the question of violence is involved, even when the whole policy of the Congress should be to avoid prosecution, even though a person has offended against the law, the right approach to this problem for the Congress ministry should be a nonviolent approach.

We are wedded to nonviolence and we have to carry that approach into our state actions. Therefore our approach, even when a wrong appears to be done, should be a nonviolent one. Yet there may be circumstances when it may be inevitable that, for fear of a greater wrong, the state might have to take action. We cannot, I submit, lay down that no action can ever be taken. We cannot conceive of a free India, when it is invaded by foreign aggression, not meeting it with all the strength it commands. Similarly, internal commotions may take place. When the day comes when force is eliminated, I hope the state will also eliminate it because the people will then be so advanced that they will be able to cooperate with each other and do without the help of the state. We have been actuated by high ideals. We can take pride in that we, as an organization, have built them up. We want to show to others that our idea of functioning as a government is different from the idea of other people.

1. Speech at the A.I.C.C. session, Calcutta, 30 October 1937, during the discussion on the policy which the Congress ministries should adopt in meeting sedition and violence. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 31 October 1937.

53. The A.I.C.C. and the Congress Ministries[1]

The recent meeting of the A.I.C.C. in Calcutta was the first meeting held since the formation of Congress ministries in various provinces. Inevitably, the work of these ministries came up for discussion and review. Such a review is, in the nature of things, beset with difficulties. These difficulties increase because we have no rules or conventions for the purpose. We are on new ground, and though we might adjust ourselves to it in course of time, we may not pitch our tents on it, for our resting place is yet afar and we must ever keep moving towards our objective. It is clear that Congress ministers have to follow Congress principles and to govern themselves by the general directions issued by the Congress or the All India Congress Committee or the Working Committee. It is also clear that it is not possible or desirable to interfere in the day to day work of the ministries, or to call for explanations from them for administrative acts, unless some important principle is involved. Even when such explanations are necessary, it is not always easy to discuss them in a public forum like that of the All India Congress Committee. We have thus to strike a mean to keep the control of the policy in the hands of the A.I.C.C. and not to interfere too much in administrative matters. Where such intervention is considered desirable, the Working Committee should make inquiries and, if necessary, report to the A.I.C.C.

Our past history has been agitational history and we have developed as a semi-revolutionary organisation. By our day to day activities and especially through the great mass movements that the Congress has undertaken, we have released an enormous amount of energy among our people. That energy represents the strength of the nation, provided it is not frittered away but is directed in a disciplined way to consciously held objectives. To some extent it was directed in the past to constructive activity but the background was largely agitational. That background has still to remain as our struggle for freedom is likely to bring in the future severe conflicts with British imperialism. Nevertheless, the acceptance of office and responsibility and the formation of Congress ministries have changed considerably the aspect of our work. Our general attitude to these ministries cannot be agitational in the old sense of the word; we cannot agitate against ourselves. We may and should,

1. Allahabad, 4 November 1937. *The Leader*, 8 November 1937. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 78-85.

when necessity arises, criticise them or press them to further the Congress programme, but that criticism must be friendly and cooperative criticism. Any unfriendly or hostile attitude to them must inevitably react on the Congress organization and weaken it. Hostile criticism must logically lead to the changing or the ending of the ministry. Circumstances might arise when this is necessary, and when this happens we shall take the step deliberately and after full consideration, realizing the consequences which will flow from our action. To indulge in any action on the spur of sentiment and without thought of the consequences is likely to lead us to trouble, out of which it may be difficult to extricate ourselves.

It is not an easy matter for the Congress organisation, with its vast membership and past traditions, to adapt itself to new conditions. Contradictions and conflicts are inherent in the situation, yet perhaps we may tone them down to some extent with some more experience and adjust ourselves to the new scheme of things. But that scheme has no permanence in it for our very acceptance of office is limited and circumscribed by our pledge to combat and end the new constitution, and to produce the conditions and the strength in the nation for a constituent assembly to meet and frame the constitution for an independent India.

Our primary objective is thus, and must remain, to increase the strength of the Congress and through it of the nation. In this task, unless there is the fullest cooperation between the Congress organisation and the Congress ministries, difficulties will continually crop up and a measure of failure might also attend our efforts.

The ministries are in an unenviable position. They are tied up in many ways by the constitution and their resources are limited and largely mortgaged in favour of British imperialist and other interests. They have to function through permanent services which cannot be expected to get out of their old ruts and traditions and get in tune with the new order, however much they might loyally carry out the directions issued to them. With all these and other handicaps, the ministers have to face tremendous tasks, the legacy of a long period of inaction or wrong action on the part of previous provincial governments. Urgent and vital problems shout for solution and the very spirit we have evoked in the masses demands such a solution. Delay on our part in effectively dealing with these problems irritates many of our own people who have no clear conception of the difficulties and obstructions in our path, but who are naturally eager to get things done. Demands also come from a host of individuals for petty personal attention or to remove individual grievances and they cannot always be ignored. Administrative

work absorbs a great deal of time. And so the big things are thrust into the background, and this again gives rise to complaints.

It is an embarrassing position for our ministers. On the one hand, they have to face the inherent contradictions and obstructions which flow from the present constitution; on the other, they are responsible to and have to satisfy all manner of people and committees. They are responsible to their electorates, to their party in the legislature, to the provincial Congress committee and its executive, to the Working Committee, and to the All India Congress Committee. Even local Congress committees think it their function to have their say in the work of the provincial government. All this sounds very complicated and confusing, yet in reality it is not so. What is the responsibility to the electorate? That electorate plumped for the Congress candidates not because of their individual merits, but because they represented the Congress and its programme. Nothing could be clearer than this. The vote was for the Congress. Every single Congress member of the legislature today, if he was unwise enough to backslide and seek election again in opposition to the Congress, would be defeated by a Congress candidate, whoever he might be. It is to the Congress as a whole that the electorate gave allegiance, and it is the Congress that is responsible to the electorate. The ministers and the Congress parties in the legislatures are in their turn responsible to the Congress and only through it to the electorate. The Congress, though it functions through a host of committees, is essentially one and has one basic policy. There are thus no conflicting allegiances for Congress ministers or Congress parties in the legislatures. That basic policy is laid down by the annual session, and it is interpreted and implemented by the A.I.C.C. The Working Committee, as the executive of the Congress, is charged with the carrying out of this policy.

The A.I.C.C. should therefore consider the broad lines of policy and discuss questions of principle. The Working Committee can, whenever necessity arises, go into greater detail and review the work of the ministries. For the A.I.C.C. to discuss the details of administrative action is obviously not possible, for the A.I.C.C. is a public forum and such acts cannot be discussed with advantage in public by large committees. It would be unfair to the ministers to ask them to make public statements about all the details of their administrative work.

To some extent this procedure would apply to the provincial Congress committees also. It is necessary and desirable that the ministers should keep in the closest touch with the provincial committees, for these committees are the channels through which they reach the electorate. If they lose touch with the P.C.Cs, they lose touch with the Congress

organisation and with the electorate. But the P.C.C. is too big a committee for any detailed discussion, or for any criticism of the ministers to be effectively met by it. The executive of the P.C.C. however is a small, compact body and the ministers should take this more into their confidence. We have been directed to coordinate our activities outside the legislatures with those inside. This can only be done effectively if the P.C.C. executive is in close touch with the ministries. The P.C.C. should also give publicity to the achievements of the ministries and to their future programme.

Local Congress committees have every right to make suggestions to and even friendly criticisms of ministers, but anything savouring of hostile criticism by them should be avoided. Such local committees are seldom in possession of all the facts, and it would make the position of the ministers intolerable if we were to require them to appear before local committees and furnish explanations to them. If a local committee has complaints or doubts, it should refer to the provincial executive, which, in its turn, in important matters, might make a reference to the Working Committee. But ministers should of course get into touch with local committees wherever they go and through them with the views of Congressmen in general and the public.

The ministries have especially to face two sets of problems: those relating to civil liberty, and those appertaining to agrarian and labour conditions. The latter have obviously the larger mass significance, and yet the former have importance as civil liberty is the basis of all progress. For us the long deprivation of many forms of civil and personal liberty has given it a special importance, and to remove the obstructions to it is our first objective. There is strong feeling in the country on this point and the Calcutta meeting of the A.I.C.C. gave expression to it. The strangling of Bengal, with her detenus and internments and externments, and bans on organizations, and ticket-of-leave persons and hosts of political prisoners, oppresses the whole of India. Perhaps one of the most potent methods of helping our comrades in Bengal is to have a clean sheet in regard to civil liberty in the provinces controlled by Congress ministries. Already the contrast between the two is great. The wider the gap, the more we demonstrate the futility and incompetence of the policy of repression.

We have stood for civil liberty and made it one of our fundamental rights. As a people claiming to be progressive we must necessarily do so as this is the only correct policy. But we have another important reason for doing so—our policy of nonviolence. That policy was deliberately adopted by us in our struggle for freedom and we have stuck to it through all these years. Equally so must we adhere to it and apply

it to those who may be opposed to us or critical of us when we control the provincial government. Even the wrong-doers must be approached nonviolently, for a violent suppression of wrong-doing does not end it. Thus a Congress ministry must avoid, as far as it possibly can, the use of the coercive apparatus of the state. It should approach the wrong-doer and try to win him over and point out the evil consequences of his act. Even if this approach is not successful, coercive action should be avoided, unless dangerous consequences are feared.

It is clear that, in spite of every desire to avoid it, coercive action may become necessary in particular cases. This will not be for sedition as such, for sedition is no crime for a Congressman, and all of us may be considered guilty of it in varying degrees. Violence or dangerous incitement to violence and communal strife cannot, however, be tolerated by any state. Even in such cases the personal approach should be a prerequisite, and our constant endeavour should be to create an atmosphere which does not encourage the violent approach to problems. Violent suppression of individuals or groups or ideas militates against this atmosphere and so, though it might be momentarily successful, it adds to the difficulties. Thus not only our policy and pledges but also expediency tell us that the widest extension of civil liberty is desirable. Congress ministries will have to go to the furthest limit possible in removing present restrictions and the laws which impose them.

54. To the Prime Ministers of the Congress Majority Provinces[1]

Allahabad
November 4, 1937

Dear Prime Minister,

You have no doubt followed the proceedings of the recent meeting of the A.I.C.C. held in Calcutta. The Committee was appreciative of the work already done by the Congress ministries but it felt, at the same time, that much remained to be done to establish a full measure of civil liberty. Great importance was attached to this and wherever any coercive action had been taken, considerable resentment was displayed. Many of the criticisms were based on ignorance of the real state of affairs. Nevertheless it is true that the A.I.C.C. is very sensitive in

1. N.B. Khare Papers, National Archives of India.

regard to any suppression of civil liberty. It feels that the Congress provinces should show a clean slate.

Objection was especially taken to the non-release of political prisoners, to books continuing to be banned, to the use of the C.I.D. for the purposes of shadowing political workers, to the demand of securities from newspapers, and to the non-repeal thus far of special repressive legislation.

I am sending you herewith copies of such resolutions as are of special interest for you. The federation resolution is of particular importance and you will notice that the provincial governments are requested to intimate to the British Government that they do not desire to be included in the proposed federation. I trust that some such resolution will be placed by your government before the assembly at an early date.

It will be desirable if the assembly also passes a resolution of sympathy with the Indian struggle in Zanzibar.[2] This resolution should request the central government to impose an embargo on cloves from abroad.

The resolution on Indian exiles is sent for your information so that your government might take such steps in regard to them as you consider feasible.[3]

The fourth resolution relates to the ban on books.[4] As you know, a very large number of books have been banned by previous governments. It is desirable that these bans on political literature be lifted as soon as possible.

The fifth resolution was referred to the Working Committee for necessary action. It raises the question of civil liberty and draws the attention of Congress ministries to the necessity of implementing the Congress manifesto in this respect.[5]

The sixth resolution relates to titles and decorations. Congress ministries cannot associate themselves with these titles, etc., but, if any titles are given while they are in power, the responsibility for these will partly rest on them. It is desirable therefore that no titles be given in the provinces where Congress ministries are functioning. The procedure adopted in Canada some years back might well be followed by the Congress ministries and a resolution passed by assemblies asking that no further titles be given.

2. See *post*, section 13, items 17 and 19.
3. The resolution urged upon the Government of India "to remove all restraints and restrictions on the entry into India of all political exiles."
4. The Congress ministries were asked to lift the ban on several proscribed books.
5. The resolution called upon the Congress ministries to release political prisoners and "to repeal repressive laws, even those which authorise detention without trial."

The seventh resolution relates to linguistic provinces.[6] This is in accordance with well-established Congress policy.

Apart from these resolutions, I should like to draw your attention to the strong feeling among Congressmen on the question of the separation of judicial and executive functions. Practical considerations might delay this separation for a while but the old Congress policy continues.

I am enclosing for your consideration a copy of an article[7] I am sending to the press today. I would beg your special attention to the question of civil liberty which is agitating the minds of so many Congressmen today.

I would add that the repeal of repressive legislation, in accordance with Congress policy as repeatedly laid down, is considered a matter which should be taken in hand at the earliest possible date. Delay in taking action injures our prestige and gives an opportunity to non-Congress provinces to justify their repressive policy.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

6. It reaffirmed the Congress policy of redistribution of the provinces on a linguistic basis.
7. See the preceding item.

55. On the Advantages of Office Acceptance[1]

I have heard with the greatest attention the distinguished speakers who spoke earlier. I have carefully thought about their reasons for suggesting that office acceptance was an error.

For a correct estimate of the position we must have a balance and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of accepting office. We have to look ahead for the major fight. Minor operations between two sides do not matter much. It is the major fight that will decide the big issues. Till such a major fight is brought about, the forces on both sides have to be manoeuvred to take up suitable positions.

We have no ready-made army. Our methods of warfare are different. The greatest effect of office acceptance is the remarkable change it has

1. Speech at Allahabad, 5 November 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 6 November 1937.

brought about in the psychology of the people and the atmosphere in the country. There are certain things which cannot be weighed accurately in any scale. They are courage, sorrow and such feelings. One great advantage has been that the burden of the common people has been lightened to some extent. Some relief has been extended to the peasants and labourers. It was a great consideration that weighed in favour of office acceptance.

A great deal still remains to be done for the masses. A great disadvantage, however, is the risk of being lulled into a false belief that we have done our duty and can afford to carry on in this manner for long. We must not forget our goal of independence. We have not retraced our steps yet and gone back upon our vow to wreck the Act. If the Governors at any time try to pick a quarrel, they might force the Congress to embark upon other methods of struggle including satyagraha. That would mean inviting a fight with the people of India. If, therefore, we did our work properly to strengthen the masses, we could rightly claim that we are preparing for the final wreckage of the Act. If our ministers go wrong, we can always call them back.

Purushottamdas Tandon has been a member of the Congress for a long time. He was elected to the provincial legislature as a Congress candidate. He continues to be a member of the Congress as long as he wishes to be so and does not go against the Congress discipline. By consenting to be the Speaker, he does not cease to be a Congressman. I think his decision not to resign from the party on his election as the Speaker is therefore quite proper.

56. On the Kanpur Strike[1]

I abandoned my visit to Assam when I heard of a recrudescence of strikes at Cawnpore. I cannot lighten the burden of the workers. You have to remove it yourselves. And you should not think that you alone are faced with difficulties. We are all confronted with great problems. I visited the mill areas and I was surprised to see how people lived in those places.

There is a good deal of talk about vested interests. I am convinced they will have to give place to socialism. It is a pity that you cannot

1. Speech at Kanpur, 9 November 1937. From *The Leader*, 12 November 1937.

apply yourselves wholeheartedly to your work. Slight obstacles or difficulties make you go off the track or discourage you. Only those who have patience and perseverance know how to work. You should not forget that for many years the Congress has been fighting for the freedom of the country. Congressmen had to go to jails and suffer in many other ways. But the fight has not ceased. There were moments when the fight slackened, and then again the thread was picked up with firm hand. The forces of imperialism could not suppress it; and even now that fight is going on. It is for this purpose that the Congress has accepted office. The ministers have always the question of their country's freedom before them, and they, therefore, want to solve the problems of the workers and the peasants and to increase their power. So long as they do not get power, it is impossible to get rid of capitalism and vested interests. There is however no doubt that forces of capitalism, widely scattered all over the world, are gradually weakening. Everywhere there is trouble. If there are strikes in one place, there are other troubles in another. I do not question the benefits that capitalism and proprietorship might have brought. But they are old and outworn things now. In order to shake off capitalism you should increase your strength, and for that you need the support of millions of men. No one leader is enough to make socialism prevail in the world. For that, the reins of the government must be gathered in the hands of the common people.

The millowners are not intrinsically bad people. The difficulty is that there is a clash of interests between the workers and the employers. The same is true about the landlords and the kisans. You must all understand this basic problem. During the last four or five months' struggle that you have been waging, there is no doubt you have gained in strength, but at the same time you have increased your anxieties also. The millowners, seeing that the workers are gaining in power, began to attack them. The workers ought not to forget that in every fight they must first assess the strength of their antagonists and their own strength. I believe that you are deceived in two ways. You over-estimate the strength of your employers and underrate your own. That is perhaps true, but you must remember that if you work together, your strength is not less than that of your employers. The second danger which besets you is that in a fit of temporary enthusiasm you think that you have triumphed and thus lose sight of the enemy's power. I am afraid the workers do not consider these basic matters in all their bearings.

The workers have always been in the forefront in the fight for freedom. For example, in Russia when the revolution took place the workers took a leading part. Coming nearer home, the workers at first were

very weak, they had no organisation and submitted meekly to all the hardships to which they were subjected by the millowners. It is true that you now have the weapon of strike, and by wielding it you can cause loss to the employers. But you should not forget that being men of resources the employers can bear such losses, while it often reduces you to starvation. The question, therefore, resolves itself into one of patience and perseverance. In such a struggle the workers are naturally faced with anxiety.

In the present strike, the workers at first were weak, but after the general strike you acquired strength. You became over-enthusiastic and overrated your strength. That inevitably led to trouble as the employers, seeing this increase in the workers' strength, wanted to check it. At this time when each party was engaged in a trial of strength, the enquiry committee appointed by the government was to commence its labours for which the millowners had made ample preparations. You, on the other hand, had not been able to get ready on account of your other preoccupations. In Bombay, the millowners have to supply certain information to the government, but in our province there is no such practice. I believe that the millowners did not like the idea of the enquiry committee. They were not eager to explain everything to it. They wanted that the tussle between the workers and themselves should go on, because in doing so the workers often committed mistakes. Last time when I addressed you, I advised you to do two things—to organise yourselves and to prepare your case for the enquiry committee. I did not ask you to submit to the hardships to which you were subjected by the employers. I wanted that you should leave that question to the mazdur sabha which would look into the matter and concentrate its attention on the preparation of your case alone for the enquiry committee.

I came to Cawnpore on account of the two strikes which are still going on. While I admit that it is an inherent right of the workers to go on strike when necessity demands it, I would advise you not to precipitate it where it is harmful. The millowners allege that they received no notice of the strikes. They say they cannot recognise the mazdur sabha which has no proper control over the workers. Therefore the workers should consult the sabha and discuss among themselves before they decide to strike. I am of the opinion that the workers have been impatient in resorting to strike in the cases of the Elgin and the Cawnpore Cotton Mills. You should terminate the strike as quickly as possible. Communalism among the workers is not at all desirable. If you allow it to invade you, then your movement would grow weak.

57. To Edward Thompson[1]

Allahabad
November 11, 1937

Dear Thompson,[2]

I have delayed in answering your letter[3] of July 25th which came long ago. This acceptance of office business has not lightened the burden of most of us. It is all very well to prevent one's enemies getting dug in, but the alternative of getting buried oneself is equally unpleasant.

I am sorry to say that nothing has been done so far about giving status to our wild animals. I agree with you that we should move in the matter and I shall remind the great ones who are Prime Ministers in the provinces today. But the human problems we have to face are sufficiently overwhelming, and it is difficult to think of much else. Besides, there is no public opinion on the subject and in this democratic age public opinion counts. And so we have to think much more of music before mosques and the like than of the slaughter of wild animals.

I am rather vague as to what should be done about these animals. There might be large reserves created but this is an expensive matter which our present governments will be afraid of touching. Can you suggest any inexpensive steps which might be taken soon?

I was greatly interested to read of the recent activities of the India Office in London which displeased you. But I think you are unjust to them. They have been brought up in a particular way and you cannot expect them to get out of the habits of a lifetime. I am afraid they will stick to them to the bitter end.

Indira wrote to me a little while back that she was going to meet you and your wife. So now I can legitimately claim a copy of your *Metcalfe*.

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (1886-1946); friend of Jawaharlal and supporter of the cause of Indian freedom; novelist, historian and writer on public affairs; his writings include *The Reconstruction of India, Enlist India for Freedom!* and *Life of Charles, Lord Metcalfe.*
3. He had referred to the need for protecting wild life in India and for reforming the India Office in London.

58. To C. Rajagopalachari[1]

Allahabad
November 13, 1937

My dear Rajagopalachari,

I have your letter of the 9th.[2] I am sorry you are still unwell and weak.

I am very sorry that you feel that I have not treated you fairly. I do not know if this refers to my conduct in Calcutta[3] or to what I have written to you recently.[4] Howsoever we might differ in any matter, we have no business to be unfair to each other, and it pains me to think that you think me guilty of this offence. It is possible, of course, that one cannot be wholly fair in matters on which one has a definite opinion, but I tried hard in Calcutta and afterwards not to allow my personal opinion to colour my conduct. Even in the expression of my views I tried to be as non-committal as I could, though in my own mind there was not much doubt. I have been distressed by many things that have taken place recently but I have kept the distress to myself or, at any rate, have not expressed it in public. Consistently I have tried to create an atmosphere of friendliness towards the Congress ministries. For this I have been sufficiently criticised by the Congress and others. In Bengal and the Punjab I am referred to as a person with two faces and two voices—one for the Bengal and the Punjab ministries and the other for the Congress ministries.

As for what happened in Calcutta, I do not know how far you think me responsible for it. I do not see myself how I could have forcibly suppressed the views of many of the members of the A.I.C.C.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P.L.-3/1937 (Pt. III), p. 389, N.M.M.L.
2. Rajagopalachari had felt that the criticism at the A.I.C.C. and Working Committee meetings at Calcutta in October 1937 of his attitude to certain matters of provincial administration "was most unthinking and unfair."
3. Jawaharlal had said that certain policies adopted by the Madras Government were contrary to the ideals of the Congress.
4. See pp. 336-337.

59. To N.B. Khare[1]

Allahabad
November 14, 1937

My dear Dr. Khare,[2]
Thank you for your brief personal letter.

I have received the copy of Pandit Dwarka Prasad's letter of the 8th November which you have sent me. I shall put up this letter for the consideration of the Working Committee. May I point out, however, that the Working Committee has all along been of opinion that there should be a coordination between the activities of the various Congress ministries? Also that the Committee has been stressing all the time that the Governor should not preside over cabinet meetings. In fact, we have stated that the Prime Minister should protest and have his protest recorded on every occasion that the Governor presides. There is no question of meekly allowing the Governor to preside. We did not want to break on this issue right at the beginning but, if this practice continues, in spite of repeated protests, we shall have to consider what action is to be taken.

The business rules referred to should certainly be revised. In this matter we cannot do anything as we do not know what these rules are. It is for a Congress ministry to take the initiative and we shall gladly inform the other ministries of the action taken.

Probably you have received the memorandum[3] on I.M.S. officers sent by some doctors to Dr. Gilder,[4] the Minister for Health, in Bombay. On this question also it is for a ministry to take the initiative in consultation with other ministries. We shall gladly help in this process of consultation.

The questions of a cut in the salaries and the abolition of commissionerships are also important. But here also I do not know what you

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.
2. (1882-1969); joined the Congress in 1919; member of the C.P. and Berar Assembly, 1923-29; member, Central Assembly, 1935-37; Chief Minister of C.P. and Berar, 1937-38; expelled from the Congress, 1938; member, Viceroy's Executive Council, 1943-46; Prime Minister, Alwar state, 1947-48; president, Hindu Mahasabha, 1949; member, Lok Sabha, 1952-57.
3. The memorandum stated that provincial ministers would have no voice in the appointments under the Government of India scheme for the reorganisation of the Indian Medical Service.
4. M.D.D. Gilder (b. 1882); an eminent physician of Bombay; Minister for Public Health, Government of Bombay, 1937-39 and 1946-52.

would like the Working Committee to do. Obviously we want a cut in the salaries. How to bring it about should be suggested by you.

I am interested to learn of your proposal to make the 26th of January a national holiday. I think this would be excellent.

I can assure you that our office is prepared to help you in every way that we can. We hope soon to start a special department in charge of a competent economist to deal with problems which the Congress ministries have to face. We can also consult experts on any specific problem referred to us by you.

I hope you will inform Pandit Dwarka Prasad of this reply of mine.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

60. The Reasons for Office Acceptance[1]

The new constitution is a mere trap. Mr. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai was a prisoner till yesterday. No doubt, he is a minister today, but has not much power. We have accepted office to give the masses the little relief that we could give and also an opportunity to develop the necessary strength for wresting real power. Personally, I would like to shatter the existing economic order of India to bits; but I alone am not the Congress.

1. Speech at the political conference held in Bara Banki on 15 November 1937. From *The Leader*, 22 November 1937.

61. On the Communal Disturbances[1]

Since I returned from Lucknow this morning people have been running to me and asking me to tell the police to arrest the *badmashes*. I do

1. Speech at Allahabad, 18 November 1937. From *The Leader*, 21 November 1937.

not consider myself an adviser to the police; while riff-raffs should certainly be arrested, I do not consider it proper that I should say that arrests should be made indiscriminately, because in the past, such complaints have led to the arrests of even innocent people. There are complaints against the police almost everywhere, but such complaints are very common in India where the government is foreign and therefore relies not on the goodwill of the people but on the help of the police. The administration cannot displease the police in this country by taking action on complaints against them, and therefore the police administration has deteriorated.

Who constitute the police? Our own kisans and our own countrymen are in it. Therefore it is a wrong policy to say that every one in the police is bad. Both good and bad people are in the police; and it is not proper to entertain the belief that the police is inimical to the people. Police officers are appointed by our own ministry, and therefore they should be under the control of the public. An attempt should be made to improve the police and secure its cooperation in maintaining peace. It is the duty of the police to preserve peace and the public also should cooperate with it in this and prevent the occurrence of incidents like those which took place in Allahabad. If the people find any defect in the police administration, attempts should be made to remove it but they should not always curse the police as a whole.

How can we preserve communal peace in the town? Firstly, the people should refuse to be disturbed or worried by reports of quarrels; secondly, they should not believe rumours, 90% of which are exaggerated; thirdly, if *goondas* provoke quarrels, efforts should be made to check them, irrespective of communal considerations. It is undoubtedly the primary duty of the police to preserve peace, but the people are also not free from responsibility in the matter.

People of all communities should form common organizations in every *mohalla*, the function of which should be to provide protection to the citizens, and with that end in view it is intended to form a corps of volunteers on behalf of the Congress, who would be trained during their spare hours in the work of public service. I wish that the administration of the town should be improved and such organisations of volunteers should work in cooperation with the police, and not as rival organizations, to preserve peace and order in the town. It is not necessary that only Congressmen should be enrolled as volunteers but anyone who wants to serve the town can be enrolled.

I hope that the people will not be upset by petty individual quarrels, and that the Hindus and Muslims will join to work together for the protection of the *mohallas*. Those who want to be enrolled as

volunteers can give their names either at the city Congress committee office or at the *mohalla* Congress committee office.

62. To P. Subbarayan[1]

Camp Amroha
November 21, 1937

My dear Subbarayan,[2]
Your letter of the 17th November came yesterday. I am sending you this answer from Moradabad district where I have just come for a Muslim bye-election.

There is one sentence in your letter which has surprised me greatly. You say: "It is so difficult for the government if those who were not in favour of acceptance of office are to take advantage of the situation and press home their view." This seems to me a strange doctrine. The acceptance or otherwise of office was not and is not an end in itself. It was a means to an end. Opinions differed as to the means. Ultimately a certain opinion prevailed. Is it your view that those who did not agree with this opinion should retire gracefully from the Congress or should play the part of lookers-on? I am unable to appreciate this viewpoint. Apart from this, the acceptance of office was made for a particular purpose and subject to certain Congress principles and programmes. If these principles are flouted and the programmes ignored, do you expect Congressmen who attach value to those principles and programmes to remain silent? I think I have probably done more to help the Congress ministries than any other person in India. I have done so because I thought it the right thing and I wanted them to function in as good an atmosphere as possible. Also because I have a sense of discipline. But I want to tell you frankly that many things that the Madras Government have done have seemed to me a negation and a reversal of fundamental Congress principles and policy. It is not a question of my

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P.L.-3/1937 (Pt. III), pp. 403-404, N.M.M.L.
2. (1889-1962); Chief Minister, Government of Madras, 1926-30; joined the Congress in 1937; Minister for Law, 1937-39 and Minister for Home and Legal Affairs, Madras Government, 1947-49; Minister for Transport and Communications, Government of India, 1959-62; Governor of Maharashtra, 1962.

being happy or not happy. These moods come and go. But we have not devoted our lives to certain causes without feeling some deep urge within us and without believing in certain principles. It may be that opinions differ as to the principle. If so, we accommodate each other or we go different ways. It depends on the extent of differences and on various other factors.

I am in fairly close touch with the Congress organisation in India and with the opinion of the rank and file Congressmen. Few things have happened during the last few months which have shocked the Congress conscience quite so much as the Batliwala prosecution.[3] This is becoming a bye-word for us wherever we go and in the Punjab and in Bengal a standing justification for every repressive activity of the government there. Only a tremendous sense of discipline has kept the average Congressman quiet under this heavy strain.

I am writing to you frankly as you would no doubt like me to. Unfortunately Rajagopalachari is unwell still and I still await his answer to the letter I sent him after the Calcutta A.I.C.C. meeting. It is not enough for the Madras Congress legislative party to approve of the action taken by your government. The A.I.C.C. and the Congress have to be satisfied.

I shall be leaving for Assam from Allahabad on the 25th. I expect to return about the 10th of December when I shall go immediately to Saharanpur and Bulandshahr for two Muslim bye-elections. After that I shall be in Allahabad for a few days.

Indira is quite happy at Oxford.

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. S.S. Batliwala (b. 1905); a socialist leader of Bombay; arrested at Tellicherry on 2 October 1937 for an alleged seditious speech and sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment. On 21 March 1938 the Madras Government remitted the unexpired portion of the sentence and released him.

63. To the Members of the Working Committee[1]

Allahabad
November 24, 1937

Dear Comrade,

It is now clear that the A.I.C.C. meeting will not be held in December or January. The great majority of the members are against such a meeting. But a meeting of the Working Committee is very necessary to consider the fast developing situation in the country. I am afraid it is difficult to fix a meeting in December. I am going to Assam tomorrow and shall not be back till the middle of December. Muslim bye-elections in the U.P., provincial conferences and other important engagements will keep some of us busy in the latter half of December. Other members of the Working Committee are also likely to be busy then. Thus the nearest available date seems to be in the first week of January.

Then about the venue. Ordinarily we would have chosen Wardha to suit the convenience of Gandhiji. But in view of his weak health and the doctors' imperative orders, it seems inadvisable to put this burden on him. I would therefore suggest some other place. If you agree, I would propose Allahabad for the venue. This would have certain obvious advantages.

You are no doubt following with interest, and perhaps with a measure of anxiety, the rapid growth of a situation in the country which seems to be leading to a crisis. There is the possibility of a political crisis on the federation issue. There is the communal situation which, owing to the efforts of some members of the Muslim League, is taking an ugly turn. There is the increasing agitation in the Indian states from Kashmir to the south, comprising all manner of states, both big and small. There is the unusual ferment among students. But most important of all is the state of the industrial labour and peasantry. The labour situation is serious and is causing some anxiety in many places. And yet the vital problem continues to be that of the peasantry. If one is to judge from the newspapers, not much is happening in the rural areas. But, as a matter of fact, there is a tremendous awakening and ferment among them, and I am inclined to think that this will take the shape of some form of aggressive action unless satisfaction comes to them.

All these happenings, unconnected as they seem, can hardly be unrelated. What is the underlying cause? Not surely a few agitators,

1. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. This letter was also sent to C. Rajagopalachari and G.B. Pant.

although agitators may give point to an urge or a struggle. There is obviously a deeper cause. All these indications point to a pre-revolutionary stage of a struggle. The immediate cause may be the formation of Congress ministries, which has released the long-suppressed emotions of the masses, and given rise to the hope of an early deliverance. The real cause is the delay in solving the problems of the masses, and the repression that kept them down having been lifted, the problems and the urgent demand for their solution jump to the forefront.

We have rightly tried to curb all this indiscipline and to direct this fresh energy into right channels. We have not wholly succeeded, but it must be said that on the whole the discipline of the Congress has been a powerful factor in the country. Will this discipline hold?

The Congress organisation today has grown vaster than ever and our apparatus to control it and work it—our offices and the like—are not big enough for the task. But this is only the mechanical part of it, important though it is.

The real question before us is a more vital one. What should be our basic policy in view of this countrywide development, a development which we must welcome, except for the indiscipline involved in it? Ignoring it does not help. There are only two ways of dealing with it: the way of repression, and the way of solving some at least of the problems which affect the masses and thus controlling and disciplining the new forces that are growing everywhere.

Obviously the way of repression is not open to us, though we may indulge in it to some extent for specific purposes. We are not experts in this business and we have no taste for it. In any event, we are bound to fail as we are not likely to carry the sympathy of the people with us, and without that we are powerless.

The only other way is to press hard, and rapidly, for substantial relief for the masses, notably for the peasantry and secondly industrial workers. Failure to do so will overwhelm us.

I am endeavouring to give my personal reactions in this letter. I cannot discuss the whole complex situation in any detail but I think it my duty to place before my colleagues of the Working Committee the general trend of my thought. I am anxious to do so because I see a crisis of considerable magnitude approaching and we must analyse it and prepare ourselves for it. I also feel that some of our provincial governments are too engrossed in their day to day problems to give adequate consideration to the basic issues. A recent development in which the Congress governments have taken to the use of the Special Powers Act and of the sedition section of the Penal Code, and the demanding of securities from newspapers, even prior to publication, fill me with

apprehension. Nobody can doubt that repressive activity must be indulged in by a state on occasion. But that activity fails in its purpose if it results in encouraging the very tendencies it seeks to check. Repression by a Congress government can never succeed except on rare occasions when it is obviously directed to open violence. In other cases it will only fan the flames of discontent.

The use of special powers by a Congress government on any occasion gives the final justification for their imposition by the British Government during the civil disobedience movement. It is an invitation to them to use them again when the time for conflict comes, and when they are so used, as they are bound to be, our mouths will be shut and all criticism hushed.

The Batliwala case may or may not have been justified on the merits. But the fact remains that it has shocked large numbers of Congressmen and has given the fullest justification to non-Congress governments to indulge in repression. So also the demand for pre-publication security. What is there to distinguish our governments from the non-Congress governments? Not much, so far as civil liberties are concerned.

If we follow this path—and we cannot remain stationary—we must either march ahead along it or choose another path, or we shall have to copy the methods of the British Government. We shall slowly become their replica, doing their work and preserving them from the odium of doing it. There is no middle path. So this is a vital question for us. Are we gradually to line ourselves with the forces behind the British Government?

More important still is our agrarian and labour policy, and specially the former. There is a tendency to tone this down for fear of estranging the big landlord elements. We do not want to estrange anybody but when vital issues are at stake and there is conflict between the masses and small groups, we must choose the interests of the former. And this not only because we are committed to this policy, but because there is no other way. Any attempt to choose half-way houses will please nobody and will discredit us with the masses.

I have come to think more and more that a brave approach to the agrarian problem is the only way to solve the communal problem. During my tours in connection with the Muslim bye-elections in the U.P., I have realised that the only thing that counts with the Muslim rural voters is the U.P. Government's orders staying arrears of rent suits and processes for debt. They are eagerly expecting big things to follow. If these big things fail to materialise, there will be a reaction, and a communal reaction. Apart from the other big things, if it is eventually decided to ask them to pay the old arrears of rent, there will be a roar

of protest, and I am sure that in effect the arrears will not be realised. Thus it seems to me that all these arrears must be wiped out completely. So also old debts. This in itself will not be enough.

This letter is already very long and I cannot go on. But I hope I have sufficiently indicated what I have in my mind, and I would like my colleagues to give consideration to it. We are overwhelmed with problems. That is all the more reason why we should see them in proper perspective and spot the real issues.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

64. To K. Bhashyam[1]

Allahabad
November 25, 1937

My dear Bhashyam,[2]
Your letter of the 18th Nov. I am surprised to read it. There can be no question whatever of the Congress councillors giving an address of welcome to the Viceroy. This would be entirely against the Congress policy. In fact, Congressmen should not join in any function of welcome to him. The release of some of the detenus in Bengal or any other development has nothing to do with our fundamental policy which is one of consistent opposition to British imperialism of which the Viceroy is the representative in India.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-19(ii)/1937, p. 27, N.M.M.L.
2. (1882-1959); a leading Congressman of Madras; joined the freedom movement and was imprisoned in 1931 and 1942; president, Madras District Congress Committee, 1936; member, Madras Assembly, 1937-39; Minister for Law in Madras Congress ministry, 1946-47; went to Malaya for I.N.A. trials, 1946.

65. To G.B. Pant[1]

Allahabad
November 25, 1937

My dear Pantji,
I am leaving for Assam today and am not likely to be back before the middle of December. Before I go, I want to write to you and tell you that I am greatly distressed at the turn events are taking all over India, in so far as the Congress ministries are concerned. In my letter[2] sent to the members of the Working Committee, a copy of which was sent to you, I gave expression to my feelings. That opinion was restrained in expression, but behind that restraint there was an intensity of conviction. If I may put it in technical language, the Congress ministries are tending to become counter-revolutionary. This is of course not a conscious development, but when a choice has to be made the inclination is in this direction. Apart from this the general attitude is static. We dare not be static for that means that we are merely carrying on the tradition (with minor variations) of the previous governments. Indeed, we cannot remain static for long for the world is not static. Inevitably the choice has to be made and I fear the choice too often is of the wrong kind.

I am quite sure that the advent of Congress ministries has resulted in a great accession of strength to us. Partly this has no doubt been due to certain initial measures taken by them, but very largely the change was a psychological one which was inevitable. But we cannot live on psychology, or on the reputation of a few good deeds. We have been carrying on for many months now and we have to show greater results, and now that the time for going forward comes we show a marked tendency to go back. Of course we cannot go back because the movement is too strong to permit us to go back. But in trying to do so we weaken that movement greatly and do exactly what the British Government has been trying to make us do these many years—create a split and get the Congress or part of the Congress to adopt what is essentially a pro-imperialist policy. If this is a likely contingency, then the sooner we are out of office the better. I am quite clear that we are better out than in, unless we can go ahead much faster than we have been doing. Indeed for the present, especially in Madras and Bombay, the question is of not going back.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See pp. 361-364.

It may be that I have got the wrong perspective, but I can only think and act according to my own lights. And the issues are too serious to be slurred over.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

66. On the Role of Congress Workers[1]

The Congress ministries are certainly working under the constitution, but a time may come when their hands may be tied down by the rigours of the constitution, and a conflict with the British Government may become inevitable, and the Congress may be forced to embark again on a campaign of civil disobedience. But I think our strength is now sufficiently great and we cannot be suppressed even in civil disobedience.

If we are fully organised and the whole nation follows the Congress decisions, then the British Government would hesitate in provoking a conflict. The whole question before us is how to further strengthen our *sangathan.* I am sure that there is no organisation except the Congress which can take the country to its goal. There are some organisations which can render assistance in that direction, but none except the Congress can carry on that work.

I cannot approve of the spirit of rivalry between the Congress bodies and the organisations like kisan sabhas. I have received reports from some districts that the people of kisan sabhas create disputes with Congress *mandals,* which are also composed of kisans. On account of rivalries, disputes have arisen at meetings about red and national flags. Such quarrels only tend to weaken the strength of the Congress. The red flag is a symbol of labour and to some extent also of kisans, and therefore it should be respected; but it should not cause conflict with the national flag. The kisans cannot understand the minute differences between the two and consequently a spirit of rivalry in regard to the two flags might upset them. The national flag is recognised by the villagers all over the country, and therefore an attempt to remove it and replace it by a red or any other flag would be disgraceful. The national flag at

1. Inaugural address at the Congress workers educational camp held at Allahabad on 26 November 1937. From *The Leader,* 29 November 1937.

present stands against the British flag, and therefore any attempt to weaken the national flag would amount to increasing the strength of the other flag. Consequently they should respect the red flag also, because it stands for noble objects, but they should all combine to increase the strength of the national flag.

Ten days are not enough to understand the problems that face the country, but the object of the camp is to draw the attention of the workers to those problems, while they should always consider themselves to be students and continue the study of those problems.

Congress *mandals* are very useful. They are in direct touch with the people. The need for preparing *swayam sewaks* of the right type in every *gram* or *mandal* is very great, and I suggest that batches of villagers should learn the work of *swayam sewaks* in their own villages and then teach others, as the holding of educational camps at distant places is an expensive job, and also because it would take many years to train the people of the whole district by that method. We want to prepare the right type of *swayam sewaks*, and to create a spirit of service and military discipline in them.

People should understand that Swaraj is not attained merely by the acceptance of office by the Congress. There are thousands of obstacles in the way of the attainment of Swaraj, and we do not accept the new constitution because it does not give us Swaraj. At the same time the Congress ministries can strengthen the hands of the people in their struggle for Swaraj. Moreover, during the period of the last four or five months when the Congress ministries have been functioning, the strength of the masses has considerably increased and a new spirit instilled in them. That new life should be put to the best use and should not be allowed to fritter away.

Officials of the *mandals* should realise their responsibilities. I have recently seen a notice issued on behalf of a certain *mandal* calling upon a person to appear before it in order to answer a charge made against him. It was worded like a court summons. That is certainly a sign of enthusiasm but if Congress *mandals* involve themselves in such matters as the award of punishments, there is the danger of their breaking up on account of party factions as happened in the case of panchayats in the past. An effort should certainly be made to check quarrels but they should not act like criminal courts. A time would come when they would be able to settle disputes among themselves, but it has not yet come.

In this connection, the necessity of cooperation between the public and the police comes to the forefront. The attitude of the public should not invariably be one of hostility towards the police.

There is a proposal to amend tenancy laws. I hope that the new legislation will provide sufficient relief to the tenantry, though it may not be to the extent we desire because of many obstacles. The Congress *mandals* and committees should send, from time to time, the kisans' grievances to the ministers, but not by way of agitation. The zamindars are organising an agitation, and therefore it is necessary that the kisans' grievances also should reach the government formally from time to time.

I hope that the workers will follow the lectures that will be delivered at the camp and understand the problems that will be put before them. How to strengthen their *sangathan* is the one important problem before them. Indians have a sufficiently bad reputation for quarrelling among themselves, but within the Congress organization there should be no dissensions. We should give expression to our respective views with the greatest freedom but should learn to abide by the decisions arrived at in a panchayati manner.

67. To C. Rajagopalachari[1]

Camp Saharanpur
December 11, 1937

My dear Rajagopalachari,

Your letter[2] of the 30th November has managed to reach me during my tour. I realise that it is difficult to deal with such matters by correspondence. And yet delay is also harmful. There is a strong feeling in Congress circles and there have been marked repercussions in many odd places. Something in the nature of a crisis is arising in other provinces and the example of Madras is cited.

The A.I.C.C. is not meeting till Haripura but the Working Committee is likely to meet at the beginning of January.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Rajagopalachari stated that in so far as the charges against him were concerned, rather than try to deal with them by correspóndence he should prefer to speak in person to the Working Committee.

68. To Srikrishna Sinha[1]

Camp Saharanpur
December 11, 1937

Dear Srikrishna Babu,

I have read in the newspapers with great astonishment the circular[2] issued by the Bihar chief secretary to the commissioners and district officers. Anything more impertinent and insulting I can hardly conceive of. I take it that this circular could not have been issued without the consent of the Governor. In any event, this shows a spirit in the secretariat which is absolutely undesirable. I think that a speedy and effective action should be taken. The nature of this action will have to be decided upon by you. But it should be a public condemnation by you of the chief secretary's action. The Governor should also be informed that you take the strongest exception to what the chief secretary has done, and this raises vital questions which may precipitate a crisis. The circular must be withdrawn and the chief secretary should apologise to the ministers for it. Indeed, I think that you should inform the Governor that a chief secretary who behaves in this manner is not fit for his post. He must be given some other job. I am quite convinced that in this matter the strongest line must be taken by your ministry.

Apart from the contents of the circular, I think that no important circular should be issued at all by the chief secretary without the knowledge and permission of the minister concerned. That, I am told, is the practice in the U.P.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.
2. The chief secretary to the Bihar Government issued a confidential circular to commissioners of divisions stating that an order not signed by either a secretary, an under secretary or an assistant secretary to government should not be acted upon.

69. The Problems of the Provincial Ministries[1]

Conditions in the world are undergoing a rapid change; they are not what they were ten years ago. The forces of power are practically drifting towards war, and the aeroplanes and other scientific methods of warfare will make a present-day war very dangerous. I think that the British power is weakening. Though Nanking has fallen, China would not be easily suppressed by Japan. The greatest country in the world is the United States of America and I doubt if it would be able to keep itself aloof from a world war, in spite of its intentions to the contrary. A talk about the international situation might sound extraordinary in the Purushottam Das Park, yet I want to draw the attention of the people to those problems, as a time might come when they might eclipse the questions that we are faced with at present.

There is hardly anyone who deserves more sympathy than the ministers. People think that they have attained a great honour by their appointment as ministers but the fact is that a very great burden of responsibility has been put on them. In the first place, they are bound by the rigours of the constitution. In the second place, the public, the kisans particularly, expect that as Congressmen are in the ministry, their miseries would be completely wiped out. Their miseries cannot be removed until Indians attain full power and complete freedom and the entire system is changed. There are great obstacles in the way of the ministers doing any substantial good and, therefore, they deserve the greatest sympathy. I, therefore, desire that the public should express opinions on their work after giving a careful consideration to the subject. I, no doubt, want intelligent people to examine the problems and offer criticism, but at the same time, one principle of democracy is that there should be discipline; otherwise chaos would be the result.

The great achievement of the last sixteen or seventeen years' struggle is the awakening in the masses of the desire to act and the wish to work unitedly. There is a great need for ending domestic disputes as the world is threatened with a serious crisis which can be faced only through united organization. The only power which can face the coming crisis is the Congress and therefore it becomes necessary that we should enhance the strength of the Congress and maintain discipline in it. Every Congressman should understand that if, at the time of the

1. Speech at Allahabad, 17 December 1937. From *The Leader*, 19 December 1937.

crisis, he committed any act to weaken the Congress, he would be doing something unworthy of him.

It has been declared that the Congress will not accept federation. But the question arises as to what we would do if it is forced upon the country. The All India Congress Committee passed a resolution stating that it would not accept federation. The resolution was criticised and described as a weak one. Fromerly, we used strong language while making any request to the government. Now the power of the Congress has increased and as its position has become stronger, it would be undignified for the Congress to use strong language. There is always a form of language which is adopted in correspondence between two governments, and though the form may be mild the force behind it can be felt.

What are we going to do with the federation? We have got to create a mass psychology that would not accept the federation and would fight against it. We have now sufficient strength, much more than what we had during the noncooperation and civil disobedience days, and we should take full advantage of it.

70. To N.B. Khare[1]

Allahabad
December 22, 1937

My dear Dr. Khare,
I have your letter of the 19th December. I am glad to learn that you are taking action about January 26th being declared a public holiday. I entirely agree with you that such action should be uniform in all the Congress provinces. I am writing to the other Prime Ministers accordingly.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. N.B. Khare Papers, National Archives of India.

71. To Mahadeva Desai[1]

Allahabad
December 26, 1937

My dear Mahadeva,

During my Assam tour I received your telegram informing me that you had written fully to me and had sent the letter to Gauhati. That letter never reached me. I do not know what has become of it.

I expect to reach Bombay on the 2nd morning and stay there till the 5th evening. I shall try to see Bapu as early as I can, though I have no intention of discussing politics with him. I do not wish to put any strain on him in his present state of health. I also feel that it is not very profitable for us to discuss such matters.

I have not expressed my opinion on many vital matters which have occurred during the past two months. But I have felt about them very deeply, and one of these days I shall have my say. I notice that the *Harijan* is indulging more and more in controversial politics. Does the *Harijan* try to find out the facts before pronouncing its opinions?

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

72. The Continuing Struggle[1]

I have not come to Aligarh and Harduaganj merely to pat the ministry or anybody else. There are other and much more vital questions requiring our attention. We have to see how much good has come as a result of the formation of the ministries. I know that popular enthusiasm has increased a lot during the last four or five months but the ministries alone are not responsible for the same.

I feel somewhat concerned that such praise often misleads us. We sometimes praise our men too much by presenting addresses and doing

1. Speech at the U.P. Political Conference, Harduaganj, 31 December 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 1 January 1938.

such things. So many cabinets may come and go but we have to keep the other bigger problems before us. These addresses make us believe that we have reached our goal and that we should stop there. But we cannot stop anywhere on the way even though we may be occupying ministerial chairs. And therefore we should not forget our pledges.

What is our condition today? The British Government has established an organisation which keeps us as slaves. It is not so much the military force as its organisation that is keeping us down. From the Viceroy down to the *patwari* in the village, its organisation is full and complete and with that it rules over us.

If we have to fight it, then we must also make our organisation strong all over India. We are trying to reach the people. We have succeeded in creating a great organisation to oppose this force of the British Government.

But where do these ministers of ours stand today in this structure? The Viceroy continues, the Governors are also there and everybody else is there as ever before. Even the red-turbaned policeman has not changed but only six of our men are today in their midst trying to run the government. Is this Swaraj?

All we have gained is a little strength to do something and these ministries are only temporary arrangements. Because we have before us bigger issues, any praise for small achievements is likely to mislead us.

In 1918, twenty years back, a new life was infused by the noncooperation movement. People heard the names of Swaraj and of the Congress and they began to feel that the end of their miseries was near. People realized that our slavery was not a thing of fate but one that could be ended. They tried to rise and by and by they rose. The path was a long one. It was a long pilgrimage. Millions of India's men and women began to dream of the day when their shackles would be removed. So many of our leaders passed away but our struggle did not stop, because it was not confined to any particular individual.

But remember that by merely carrying aloft the national flag we are not working for Swaraj. Don't think that our work has become easier. We are all soldiers in a great army, an army of liberation. This has created new relationships among us. These attachments are closer than those among brothers. We have created a new urge in our young and old, men and women of all castes and creeds, which makes us forget our differences.

We have been fighting and it has not been a small fight against a mighty empire. We have been very successful despite all kinds of repression. We could not be suppressed. However, our dreams remain unfulfilled and yet we know we are proceeding on the right lines.

Let us, therefore, not be misled by the formation of the Congress ministries. We must not think that we have got Swaraj. If we do so, our movement will suffer.

The ministers do not represent the real strength of the Congress. That lies in our *mandals* in rural areas. They are the backbone of our organisation. They are its very foundation and have to be made strong. Otherwise, the whole structure will collapse. Our ministries may not be there tomorrow but that does not matter.

Our problem is mainly related to the hungry, unemployed and homeless people of India. But we are fighting for petty things among ourselves. In other countries even the poorer classes live much better.

I want our movement to march ahead but when circumstances prevent that I cannot bear it. I cannot tolerate any comrade of mine being behind the bars. I can bear lakhs of my brethren staking their lives in the fight for freedom but this thing I cannot bear. When I find the ministers whispering into my ears their inability to do this and that, I am reminded of the old government. I cannot bear it. We made promises and solemn promises that we would do this and we would do that, but today when I find we cannot fulfil them despite our men being ministers, I cannot bear it. We have to go in a particular direction. If we cannot do so, it is better we were not there at all.

Our country today is in a strange condition. Those who are in charge of administration do not have power and those who have power are not the administrators. These difficulties are there but we do not become despondent. We have to march ahead. Nothing but our weakness can keep us back.

Some of our Muslim friends say that the Congress is doing this and the Congress is doing that. For the last eighteen years we have been fighting and have suffered numerous difficulties. Lakhs of our brethren began to look up to the stars and showed remarkable courage. In this tremendous work of raising the spirits of millions of our brethren, we forgot petty things. The more we tried to do big things, the more did we rise and become stronger. How did these Jawaharlals and other leaders rise? They tried to do things. The bigger the things we undertook, the bigger we became. Those on whom you bestowed your love and confidence became bigger and bigger.

That raised us to our present position. This position is nothing like that of the Viceroy and Governors of today. When I go out, I go not as Jawaharlal, but as a representative of a great organisation of the people, and I feel strong. Whoever took part in this struggle rose and, as a result, thousands of leaders all over the country came up. You can learn the lesson that the bigger the things you do, the bigger you

become. Still, there are some who are trying to create differences. I am ashamed when I hear of fights over elections of Congress delegates. Mahatmaji told us that we could not win without honest methods. We had high ideals before us and so we have succeeded so far. We should therefore give up the habits of fighting among ourselves because they are not in keeping with our ideals. We decided not to deceive even our enemies. That gave us strength and raised us in the eyes of the whole world. Where then comes in this party politics?

Our Swaraj won't be either Hindu raj or Muslim raj. If there is here anyone who thinks in terms of a Hindu or a Muslim raj, he is my enemy and I will fight him.

The real strength for Swaraj lies in you, the people, not in Jawaharlals and Mohanlals. You have to strengthen yourselves, enrol as Congress volunteers, become Congress members, form Congress committees of all communities. We have to unite and carry out our work with honesty. Much bigger questions than those of relations between zamindars and tenants and other things will come up, but you must remember that you have to become united and strong.

73. To Edward Thompson[1]

Allahabad
January 30, 1938

Dear Thompson,

I returned today and received your letter of January 2nd. There is one matter I should like to correct immediately. This is about the salaries of Congress ministers.[2] These salaries are definitely fixed at Rs. 500 a month. Besides this there are two allowances, house allowance and motor allowance. Both these together cannot exceed Rs. 250 a month. That is, a minister can in no event get more than Rs. 750 a month. Some ministers are not charging these allowances. Some other ministers are occupying government buildings especially meant for ministers which have a higher rental value. As the buildings were there, they were occupied although they would not have been taken if heavy rent

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Thompson had written: "I have been made very unhappy to hear that this sacrifice is largely bogus since they are taking the rest in 'allowances'... I hope you can tell me it is a lie."

had to be paid for them. In no case is a minister getting more than Rs. 750 for salary plus allowances.

As for travelling, he is supposed to travel as far as possible third class, though he is permitted to travel in higher class whenever necessity arises. The use of saloons by the ministers has been completely given up. Nor do they ever travel first class. But occasionally they take a second class berth, not the whole compartment.

As for the members of the assemblies, we have also laid down that they should be paid at the rate of double third class fare.

I am writing in haste as I am in Allahabad only for a short while. I am leaving again.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

74. On the Speaker's Position in the Legislature[1]

Some controversy has taken place as to the position of the Speaker in the legislature. Some people are inclined to the view that the practice of the British House of Commons should be followed here. Others are inclined to the different practice which prevails in the United States of America and elsewhere. The question is whether the Speaker should abstain from participation in politics outside the legislature. Personally, I agree with the position taken up by Shri Purushottamdas Tandon, Speaker of the U.P. Assembly.[2] It is obvious that the Speaker must be absolutely impartial in his dealings as Speaker. He must protect the rights of the minorities. If that is conceded, as it must be, then I see no reason why he should not participate in activities outside the legislature. This becomes all the more important in a country situated as India is at present, that is, a country under alien domination struggling to be free. Every Indian feels, or ought to feel, strongly in this matter and should try to throw his weight on

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 1 February 1938. *The Tribune*, 2 February 1938.
2. He stated that he would participate in politics, thereby following the French and American conventions and not the British convention.

the right side, the only side so far as he is concerned. Every Congressman is bound to do so by his convictions and temperament. For him to say that by virtue of election to the speakership he has suddenly become a neutral element in politics is to delude himself as well as others. We cannot become neutrals. A speakership or any office or position is a minor matter—the real thing is the struggle for freedom to which we are dedicated. It is from the latter point of view that everything has to be judged.

There is another aspect of this matter. We are apt to follow almost blindly British practice and procedure whether they fit in with our requirements or not. There is no reason why we should do so, and we must shake off these shackles. It is open to us, of course, to accept this practice where we choose to do so, but it must not be thrust down on us either by law or convention or, what is worst of all, by a slavish habit of mind which is unable to think in other terms.

75. On Differences between Governors and Ministers[1]

In the event of differences between a Governor and the ministers, the latter should not resign but take the constitutional crisis on to a higher plane, making it an issue between the Governor and the assembly as in England where the issue is treated as a conflict between the Crown and the Parliament. In case the Governor dissolves the assembly, and dismisses the cabinet, they should refuse to resign and continue to function, thus developing a first-class crisis. This is, of course, my personal view.

Subsequent developments will depend on the strength of the masses. The federation will not come if the nation demonstrates its strength. But if it is ushered in, it should be combated constitutionally.

The Working Committee has not discussed the possibility of coalition governments in Bengal and Assam. The news appearing in the press about this is a piece of conjecture, having no foundation whatsoever.

1. Address to the Congress workers, Jhansi, 7 February 1938. From *The Hindu*, 8 February 1938.

76. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
March 5, 1938

My dear Krishna,
I have come back to Allahabad after a long absence. A number of letters have come from you, some reached me at Haripura, the others met me here. These letters are dated the 9th February (four), the 16th and the 19th February.

I do not want to deal with the matters, you have touched upon[2] now at any length, partly because I am tired out and have not been keeping very well, though there is nothing physically wrong with me, and partly because I am not quite sure how things will shape themselves in the A.I.C.C. office. My own connection with it will not be so intimate as it has been.[3] I was pressed hard to become the General Secretary this year. But I could not tolerate the idea of having to deal with a tremendous amount of routine work which would have left me no leisure. It was as much as I could do to consent to remain a member of the Working Committee. But for Subhas and the ministerial crisis[4], I had almost decided to keep out of the Working Committee.

R.U.P.—About this I doubt that much can be done at this end but I shall think about it later.

Federation—I think you have attached too much importance to the visits of Lothian and Samuel.[5] They have made no real difference to the Congress. Whatever people may think in England, it may be said with confidence that the federation, as proposed, will meet with the

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letters Krishna Menon referred to the proposed meeting of *Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix*, the visit of Lord Lothian to India and the need to fight the federation, and developments in world politics and their effect on India.
3. At the Haripura session of the Congress in February 1938, Subhas Bose succeeded Jawaharlal as Congress President.
4. The Congress ministries in the U.P. and Bihar which resigned on 15 February 1938 on the issue of release of political prisoners resumed office after reaching an understanding with the respective Governors.
5. Herbert Louis Samuel (1870-1963); British statesman and philosopher; chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, 1909-10 and 1915-16; Home Secretary, 1916 and 1931-32; high commissioner, Palestine, 1920-25; chairman, Liberal Party organization, 1927-29; leader of the Liberal Parliamentary Party, 1931-35; attended Haripura Congress in February 1938; author of several books including *Philosophy and the Ordinary Man* (1933) and *In Search of Reality* (1957).

most determined opposition on the part of the Congress. Indeed I am not all sure that it will ever materialise. The resolution of the Haripura Congress on the federation[6] laid particular stress on the Indian states being changed out of recognition before we could combine with them. I think this stress was desirable as it brought up the problem of the states and their internal conditions to the forefront.

Ministerial Crisis—This crisis has been resolved almost entirely in favour of the Congress and all the prisoners concerned have either been released or will be released in the course of a week or so. The language used by the Congress was moderate and restrained. But the intention was definitely to make this a major issue, if necessary. We did not want to have a major conflict on this particular issue if we could avoid it with dignity. We wanted to get through our tenancy legislation,[7] if possible. Also to concentrate on the federation issue. But having taken this step we were prepared for all the consequences, which meant inevitably a crisis in the other provinces also and all-India action by the Congress. In U.P. the agrarian problem would have assumed big dimensions immediately.

In this crisis Gandhiji played an important part. He was quite clear that we could not submit to Viceregal interference. In fact, he felt that we had delayed this matter.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

6. The Haripura Congress resolution on federation said that a real federation should consist of free units, and the Indian states participating in the federation should have representative institutions and civil liberties and responsible governments, as in the provinces.
7. The United Provinces Tenancy Bill introduced in April 1938 was passed in December 1939 after heated debates. It ensured permanent tenure for the kisans, abolished *sir* land above 50 acres and provided for an assured return to the kisan by lowering the rent.

77 To Agatha Harrison[1]

Allahabad
March 5, 1938

Dear Agatha,

Your letter of February 16th. The ministerial crisis has ended, as you know, in a more or less satisfactory manner. There will probably be

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

some quiet sailing for a while. But the whole position is one full of difficulty and such crises might arise at any time.

I have not been keeping very fit during the last fortnight and I am going off to my sister's house in the hills—a remote place above Almora where letters and telegrams come twice a week. I shall stay there for about two weeks.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

78. To Arabinda Sen[1]

Almora
March 11, 1938

Dear Friend,[2]
I have your letter.[3] I am afraid I cannot discuss at any length the question that you have raised. But I want to tell you that the Congress has not changed its policy in the least regarding the new constitution. It cannot act in an adventurist manner and it must choose its ground for a big conflict. In the ministerial crisis that arose we were perfectly prepared for a conflict, but the British Government climbed down completely. It would have been absurd for us to have the conflict under the circumstances.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5 (Pt. III)/1938, p. 429, N.M.M.L.
2. A resident of Calcutta.
3. He wanted to know why the Congress did not take advantage of the ministerial crises in Bihar and U.P. in order to wreck the constitution.

79. To P. Subbarayan[1]

Almora
March 11, 1938

My dear Subbarayan,
Thank you for your letter.[2] It is difficult to discuss big matters of policy in the course of a letter. But I agree with you that it is highly desirable for Prime Ministers to meet the members of the Working Committee to discuss important matters and for the coordination of their general policy. We have always invited the Prime Ministers to the Working Committee meetings, but unfortunately they have not always been able to come.

I am afraid I cannot go to Ootacamund. But thank you for the invitation all the same. I do not like hill stations. When I go to the mountains I prefer solitude. I have come here to Khali near Almora in search of it. There are no houses near us for miles around, and I am getting the rest and refreshment that I want.

There is some chance of my going to Europe this year round about June.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P.L.-3(Pt. II)/1937-38, p. 87, N.M.M.L.
2. He suggested that the Working Committee should keep in touch with the Congress ministries and lay down broad principles of policy.

80. To Sampurnanand[1]

Almora
March 26, 1938

My dear Sampurnanand,[2]
I wonder if you have seen my little book called *Letters From a Father to His Daughter* in English. This came out about nine years ago, and

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. At this time he was Minister for Education in U.P.

was subsequently translated into Hindi and Urdu. The Hindi translation was by Prem Chand.

Some months back I mentioned both to Pantji and Pyarelal Sharma[3] that this book would be a suitable one for primary and secondary schools here. I suggested that if the government were prepared to use the book, I would give them all the author's rights in it as well as the publishers', so that they could issue it cheaply and directly themselves. Obviously there was no question of any profit by the author or a publisher. Still I could not very well push one of my own books, although it is supposed to be very good for the children. Apparently nothing was done.

Unknown to me, my publishers carried on negotiations with the Calcutta University and in Assam through the medium of the Oxford University Press and the book has now been prescribed both in Bengal and in Assam. I do not personally like this profiteering business on text books, but my publishers, Kitabistan, have entered into all manner of contracts with the Oxford University Press as well as the authorities in Bengal and Assam. It is not possible for me to interfere with them now. All this relates to the English edition only.

I am writing to you about the Hindi and Urdu editions and suggesting to you that you might utilise them if you think this worthwhile. There are no contracts relating to them and I shall be very glad to give my rights in the book to the provincial government if it is prepared to issue it for its schools. That is to say, that the provincial government will not have to pay anything to me and probably nothing to the publishers. They could easily issue the book, on a large scale, at four annas a copy. But this should be confined to boys and girls in the schools and should not be for public sale. My publishers can bring out an edition for public sale separately.

I am putting this to you as well as to the Bihar education department for your and their consideration. You will let me know what you think about it.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. (1873-1941); a leading Congressman of Meerut; Minister for Education in the Congress ministry in U.P. from July 1937 to 2 March 1938 when he resigned.

81. To General Secretary, U.P.P.C.C.[1]

Allahabad
April 14, 1938

Dear Comrade,

I see from the newspapers that someone is organising a kisans' march and demonstration[2] before the council chamber on the 20th April. I do not know who is doing it. So far as I know the P.C.C. is not concerned. It seems to me highly undesirable for repeated demonstrations to be held before the council chamber. Everybody tries to do so nowadays and the whole object of such demonstrations is thus frustrated by making them cheap and ludicrous. Besides, I think it very wrong for kisans to be asked to march repeatedly to Lucknow. Demonstrations of the kisans may be desirable but it is far better to have them locally. Even if a demonstration is held in Lucknow it should be held away from the council chamber.

Whoever organises such demonstrations does it with some of the prestige of the Congress, and the Congress name is thus inevitably dragged in. The P.C.C. should therefore consider this matter and give definite directions for Congressmen to abide by. It is improper for the P.C.C. to be dragged in without consultation or against its will by individual Congressmen or other organisations. Other organisations of course are free to do what they like. But Congressmen, even though they are connected with other organisations, should only do such things as are consistent with the P.C.C.'s policy. Will you therefore kindly put this matter up before the next meeting of the council?

I should also like you to find out who is responsible for this announcement and to communicate to those concerned my views on the subject.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-20(Pt. II)/1938-39, p. 239, N.M.M.L.
2. The proposed demonstration of kisans before the council chamber on 20 April 1938 was abandoned after Jawaharlal's protests. See also *post*, items 82 and 84.

82. On the Proposed Kisan Demonstration[1]

I find from newspapers that a kisan demonstration is being organised in front of the council chamber in Lucknow on April 20. I do not know definitely who has done so. On enquiry I find that the provincial Congress office or any local Congress committee have nothing to do with this. It seems to me highly undesirable that repeated demonstrations should be held before the council chamber. The very object of such demonstrations is frustrated by such repetition and they are made cheap and ludicrous. We have recently had several demonstrations of this kind organised by odd groups with grievances.

To demonstrate peacefully is the right which we must protect, but to demonstrate so as to interfere frequently with the work of the assembly seems to me highly improper. Those who encourage this set a bad example, which all kinds of people will follow to public detriment. To ask kisans to march long distances and gather before the council chamber at frequent intervals is no service to kisans. It is grossly unfair to them. It is far better for them to demonstrate in their local areas and to give expression to their wishes there.

The provincial Congress committee has called for observance of kisan day on April 17 and all of us should make this a success. That is the right way.

Congress committees should make it perfectly clear that the demonstration organised for April 20 has nothing to do with the Congress. This is a matter which will have to be considered by the council of the provincial Congress committee, for the Congress organisation cannot remain a passive spectator when its name and prestige are used for purposes that are considered undesirable. It is also necessary that no Congressman should do anything that may be inconsistent with the provincial Congress committee's policy.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 14 April 1938. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 15 April 1938.

83. On the Proposed Agrarian Reforms in U.P.[1]

We should all remember why we are celebrating today a special kisan day all over the province. It is because for many years the Congress in this province has stood for the betterment of the kisans' lot. We have worked among the kisans, carried out enquiries and published them. There had been no-tax campaigns in the past when the kisans were suffering greatly owing to the slump in agricultural prices. On many occasions conferences and Congress committees had passed resolutions about the kisans' grievances and demanded relief. At the time of the elections last year, Congressmen went to the peasantry with their election manifesto which laid great stress on the agrarian problem. Most important of all questions is, of course, the question of Swaraj, that is, panchayati raj in which the people should have power to do what they choose. That is our objective still, as of old, and without that there can be no final relief.

But meanwhile we cannot delay agrarian reform and we must therefore give relief to the peasantry as far as possible. In order to give effect to the promises made in the election manifesto, the Congress ministry took immediate steps. The first thing it did was to issue stay orders for the arrears of rent suits and debt suits. Soon after, they appointed a large representative committee of the assembly to consider the question of agrarian reform. After that committee had submitted its report, the government framed its own proposals, and very soon those proposals will be incorporated in a bill.

It is to consider these proposals that we have met here. I am sure the kisans will approve of them for they are based on their own demands. But I must add that mere approval is not enough. We will have to face a stiff opposition from the taluqdars and big zamindars. We must, therefore, be wide awake and organised and see to it that no obstruction stops these reforms. It is possible that the upper chamber may also be obstructive, but if the kisans are well organised and are insistent in their demands we will have our way.

I therefore appeal to you to strengthen the Congress organization in every village and to follow carefully the proceedings of the agrarian bill

1. Speech on the occasion of the kisan day celebrations, Allahabad, 17 April 1938. From *The Leader*, 20 April 1938.

and give your opinions whenever necessary. For the present, we must concentrate on the agrarian measure already before us and get it passed. That will bring considerable relief to a large number of people who have suffered for long, but it will not solve the problem of land for there are many persons without land and money and are unemployed. All the other problems will also have to be tackled, and it may be that in future we may have to consider the whole question of abolishing the zamindari system. The problem of debt is also going to be tackled soon.[2]

2. The United Provinces Agriculturists Debt Redemption Bill of 1939 proposed to reduce considerably the debts of small agriculturists. The bill laid down that the creditor should not be entitled to receive a sum higher than twice the amount of the principal of the loan minus all payments that he may have received.

84. On the Need for Kisan Demonstrations[1]

Some days ago I issued a statement about the proposed kisan demonstration before the council chamber in Lucknow. I learn that in response to my request this demonstration has been abandoned by the organisers. I am very grateful to them for this and at the same time I must apologise to them for certain statements of mine which were based on ignorance. I have subsequently discovered that this demonstration was decided upon early in April at a kisan workers conference held in Lucknow under the distinguished presidentship of Acharya Narendra Deva. At that time no announcement had been made on behalf of the provincial Congress for the celebration of a kisan day on April 17th. It was rightly felt that the kisans should give organised expression to their general approval of the agrarian proposals of the U.P. Government. In view of the attempts being made by some groups hostile to the kisans to organise opposition to these proposals, it is obviously desirable and important that the kisans should have their voice heard effectively and repeatedly. After all, it is the good of these millions of peasants that must be the final criterion.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 20 April 1938. *The Tribune*, 22 April 1938.

Kisan meetings and demonstrations, to enable them to follow developments and to bring the weight of their opinion to bear on them, are thus to be encouraged, and I trust that the Congress organisation will keep alert in this matter. But I still think that demonstrations before the council chamber should only take place on rare and very special occasions and should not otherwise be encouraged. The principal question in the U.P. during the next few months is agrarian reform, and I hope that all of us, whatever our other differences might be, will co-operate fully in this long overdue endeavour to ease the burden on the peasantry.

85. To Mahatma Gandhi[1]

Allahabad
April 28, 1938

My dear Bapu,
I returned to Allahabad this morning from Lucknow and received your letter[2] together with a copy of Mahadeva's note on his visit to the Frontier. I have read this note and I shall write to Khan Sahib and Abdul Ghaffar Khan. I am not surprised at anything that Mahadeva has written. It is a natural development of what I myself saw. I had hoped, however, that some check might be imposed on the tendencies that were visible then. The only person who can do this effectively, apart from you, is Maulana Abul Kalam. I think it is highly necessary that he should go to the Frontier. Meanwhile I do hope that both the Khan brothers will come for the ministers' meeting and the Working Committee.

As you know, I have been greatly distressed at the turn events have taken in Congress politics during the last six months. Among the matters that have disturbed me is the new orientation of the Gandhi

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Also printed in *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 283-284.
2. In his letter of 25 April 1938, Mahatma Gandhi stated: "It hurts me that, at this very critical juncture in our history we don't seem to see eye to eye in important matters. I can't tell you how positively lonely I feel to know that nowadays I can't carry you with me. I know that you would do much for affection. But in matters of state, there can be no surrender to affection when the intellect rebels. My regard for you is deeper for your revolt. But that only intensifies the grief of loneliness."

Seva Sangh.[3] We are developing very rapidly on Tammany Hall lines and it is distressing to find that even the Gandhi Seva Sangh, which might have set a standard to others and refused to become just a party organisation intent on winning elections by hook or crook, has descended to the common level.[4] I feel strongly that the Congress ministries are working inefficiently and not doing much that they could do. They are adapting themselves far too much to the old order and trying to justify it. But all this, bad as it is, might be tolerated. What is far worse is that we are losing the high position that we have built up, with so much labour, in the hearts of the people. We are sinking to the level of ordinary politicians who have no principles to stand by and whose work is governed by a day to day opportunism.

Partly of course this is due to a general deterioration all over the world, partly to the transition period through which we are passing. Nevertheless, it does show up our failings and the sight is painful. I think there are enough men of goodwill in the Congress to cope with the situation if they set about it the right way. But their minds are full of party conflicts and the desire to crush this individual or that group. Obviously bad men are preferred to good men because the former promise to tow the party line. When this happens there is bound to be deterioration.

For months past I have felt that I could not function effectively in India as things were going. I have carried on of course as one can always carry on. But I have felt out of place and a misfit. This was one reason (though there were others also) why I decided to go to Europe. I felt I could be more useful there and in any event I would freshen up my tired and puzzled mind. I have found it difficult to discuss any matter at length with you because I do not wish to tire and worry you in your present state of health. And then

3. It was formed in 1923 but its policy and programme continued to evolve till 1934 when they became more defined. Broadly, its aims were the removal of untouchability and promotion of village reconstruction work and village industries. At the meeting of the Sangh in April 1937, when asked whether those who entered the legislatures might be members of the Sangh, Mahatma Gandhi said that the members of the Sangh should also enter the legislatures as "no political programme can stand without the constructive programme.... But there should be no scramble for power. That will be our undoing. Only those will go as are asked by the Gandhi Seva Sangh to go...."

4. Later, in his letter of 7 May 1938 to Jawaharlal, Mahatma Gandhi wrote: "What is it in the new orientation of the Gandhi Seva Sangh that has disturbed you? I must own that I am responsible for it. I should like you to tell me unhesitatingly what has disturbed you. If I have erred, you know I shall retrace my steps as soon as I discover the error."

I have also felt that such discussions do not yield any worthwhile results.

I have decided to sail from Bombay on the 2nd June. How long I shall be away I do not know. But probably I shall return in September towards the end.

On the 1st of May I am going for a week to Garhwal. Sarup will go with me and we shall have a short aeroplane flight over Badrinath and the snows. On return from Garhwal I shall go to Bombay for the ministers' meeting and the Working Committee.

Yours affectionately,
Jawahar

86. On the Difficulties of the Congress Ministries[1]

The calling of the Prime Ministers' conference[2] has been a beneficial move and good results have followed therefrom. They have reviewed the work they had done during the last nine or ten months. They had also to find out how much of what they intended to do had remained incomplete. They also wanted to find out what were the defects in their work and how they could remove those defects so that the strength of the Congress was increased.

The work before the ministers is particularly difficult in this country, as there are many obstacles in their way. I am reminded of a cartoon in which India was represented as an elephant, one of its legs having been secured by means of a rope to a tree. Congressmen sat on the elephant and the Viceroy stood by its side egging it on to move forward and saying that the rope was elastic. Thus, we have been trying to move forward and although we are making progress, the fact remains that India is still in bondage.

I want to draw your attention to a severe handicap which the ministers are experiencing in carrying out their tasks. There is a veritable hierarchy of officials starting from the civil servants downwards. For a number of years in the past, these officials had been accustomed to a

1. Speech at Bombay, 13 May 1938. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 14 May 1938.
2. A conference of the Congress Prime Ministers of the seven provinces was held in Bombay from 12 to 14 May 1938.

particular type of administration. Congress ministries have, however, completely changed the old system.

It is, of course, difficult for these officials to learn the new way of doing things as intended by the Congress ministries. They can as well be asked to go to a school and learn all these things over again. And it is equally difficult to have them replaced by men who know how to do things in the changed circumstances. Thus, on the one hand, the Congress ministers have to carry on their work amidst severe handicaps imposed by the new constitution, and on the other, the officials are of a different frame of mind.

Unless these officials develop a missionary spirit they cannot succeed in their efforts. It is quite obvious that unless the thousands of officers under government employ show the same spirit with which the ministers are actuated, it would be impossible for them to fulfil their task. The Congress ministers are working very hard. For them, an eight-hour day has no significance. Each Prime Minister is working for sixteen to eighteen hours a day, and has consequently suffered in health.

The ministers have also discussed as to why they are not moving so fast as they intended. This might have been due to some defects and to the inherent weakness of the people themselves, and now they are devising means to get rid of this kind of weakness. At the same time, they have also to be careful to see that they are not caught too much in this snare of offices, lest they should forget the main objective for which the Congress has been striving.

The national cause will not progress unless we devote equal attention to things, both big and small. We cannot afford to neglect the cause of freedom, being immersed in the work of running the provincial administration. Our main task is to strengthen the Congress and march towards the goal of freedom. There is also the major problem of removing the poverty of the masses. The lot of the peasants is singularly hard. I am aware that mere passing of some legislation is not going to solve the problem of the peasantry once and for all. But, at least, their misery and suffering will be lessened. The final solution of their troubles can only be found when the bigger problem of India's freedom has been solved.

If we look around us, we shall see that the shape of the world has been changing fast, though we cannot say how the future would change the face of the world. We are living in stirring times and in an era of revolutionary upheavals. But if the people want to stand united and play their part they must get ready. At present, there is a kind of panchayat raj in this country. The strength of the Congress ministries

depends largely upon the people themselves. They know that the Congress is the biggest national organisation in this country and they must strengthen it. Hitherto, people were afraid of joining the Congress due to the attitude and policy it had adopted. But now the situation has altered and Congress membership has increased by leaps and bounds. But at the same time, the organisation has become weak on account of the presence of some self-seekers. We know how the villagers and peasants have benefited by the strengthening of the Congress. The villager has been able to feel the relief as he has found a reliable friend in the Congress. The Congress knows the strength of its real enemies who have the army at their command. I want the people to remain on guard against the danger posed by such forces.

87. On the Congress Attitude towards Kisan Sabhas[1]

While as a rule no conflict should occur between the Congress and the kisan sabhas, conflicts have occasionally taken place due to local causes or personal animosities rather than due to any conflict of principles. Some individuals unable to find a place in the district Congress executives have sought to organise kisan sabhas locally which might give them greater prominence.

The Congress had to take disciplinary action in the past in a few cases and where any Congressman through a kisan sabha or otherwise indulged in open activities to condemn or run down the Congress and bring it into disrepute, disciplinary action had to be taken against him. The general attitude of the Congress towards the kisan sabhas should be governed by the Haripura resolution.[2] It has been the

1. This statement drafted by Jawaharlal was issued by the council of the U.P.P.C.C. on 23 May 1938. From *The Tribune*, 25 May 1938.
2. The resolution stated: "The Congress has already fully recognised the right of kisans to organize themselves in peasant unions. Nevertheless it must be remembered that the Congress itself is in the main a kisan organization and as contacts with the masses have increased vast numbers of kisans have joined it and influenced its policy. While fully recognizing the right of the kisans to organize kisan sabhas, the Congress cannot associate itself with any activities which are incompatible with the basic principles of the Congress and will not countenance any of the activities of those Congressmen who as members of kisan sabhas help in creating an atmosphere hostile to Congress principles and policy".

proud privilege of the Congress in these provinces to identify itself with the kisans and the masses. They have taken the Congress to their heart and made it their very own, and their mud huts, the emblem of misery and poverty, proudly bear the national tricolour with its promise of deliverance. Though our organisation is national and should as such represent all groups and interests, it must remain predominantly kisan and should place their interests foremost. This is particularly necessary at present when an important agrarian bill is before the legislature.[3] The whole Congress organisation in the provinces must be mobilised to lend its support to the bill.

If Congressmen keep out of the kisan organisations, they will merely allow non-Congressmen or even opponents of the Congress to take charge of them and run them in opposition to the Congress. Their influence may not be much but they will succeed in sowing the seeds of evil and create difficulties for them. The council cannot approve of Congressmen joining any and every kisan organisation and in the event of their being run in opposition to the Congress it cannot be encouraged. It is desirable to have kisan organisations but there should be no duplication of them. The Congress is kisan in its outlook and it must retain its national character and speak the language which is in keeping with it. If a kisan sabha is to serve the cause of the kisans, it must serve in coordination with the Congress. The desire of individuals to figure prominently before the public through kisan sabhas should not be encouraged. It is only the cause of the kisans that should be pushed. It is obviously undesirable for any kisan organisation to put up its own candidates in municipal, local board, or assembly elections in opposition to the Congress candidates.

Any attempt to replace the national flag by another or to lessen its significance is not only a disservice to the national movement but also to the cause of the kisans.

3. See p. 379.

88. On the Working of the Congress Ministries[1]

If we attempt a critical analysis of the working of the Congress ministries, we shall see that on the credit side are the growth of Congress

1. Speech at Poona, 29 May 1938. From *The Hindu*, 30 May 1938.

power, the increase in Congress prestige, the widening of Congress influence and the enactment of beneficent legislation for the masses, thus vindicating the Congress claims.

On the debit side, there have appeared signs which clearly suggest that the ministries have not functioned in terms of the ultimate goal of Purna Swaraj. Their energies are now slightly deflected from the main struggle for Swaraj and in place of singleness of purpose in achieving that goal, they have now become immersed in immediate issues. The Congress has now attracted into its fold thousands who are not eager for achieving Swaraj or to join the fight, but are merely seeking personal gains. Above all, there is the fact that the Congress has lost the chastening and bracing opportunity of action, of fighting imperialism directly and thus of deriving more strength.

With the acceptance of office we have not been able to wipe out the evils of economic exploitation by imperialism and the poverty and misery of the masses. Success can however be achieved by relying on one's own strength.

89. On the Challenge of the Vested Interests[1]

I have read with interest the speeches delivered at the zamindars' conference[2] at Lucknow. There seems to be so much hysteria behind them that it is difficult to take them seriously. Still, one cannot ignore this new move of the zamindars and taluqdars and other vested interests in the United Provinces. If they want to challenge the Congress, that challenge will be gladly accepted; if they want to challenge their tenants in the U.P., the peasantry of my province will also gladly accept the challenge.

The Congress in the U.P., as elsewhere in India, has tried to proceed on a national basis, keeping in mind the interests of all groups and classes; but, inevitably, it has thought and worked in terms of masses. That has been the very basis of its existence and it must continue to function as such.

1. Interview to the press, Bombay, 1 June 1938. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 2 June 1938.
2. The Oudh zamindars' conference held in Lucknow on 29 May 1938 advocated closer cooperation between the zamindars and other capitalists "against the socialist and communist menace in the country." The U.P. Tenancy Bill was described as "unjust and mischievous".

In the United Provinces the agrarian problem has occupied the Congress these many years because of the utter poverty and the wretchedness of the tenantry under the zamindari system. After tremendous labours, we have tried to evolve proposals to lighten the burden of the peasants while retaining the present system. Even these proposals—moderate in many ways as they are—are now being attacked by big zamindars and taluqdars. The U.P. Congress is going to stick to those proposals, and threats are not going to deflect it from its stand. The big zamindars and taluqdars have sided in the past with British imperialism and they have sought to help in crushing the movement for freedom. We have tried to forget that; but if this attitude continues and an attack is made on the rights of the peasantry, we shall forget neither the past nor the present and we shall see to it that no obstacle from whatever source is allowed to come in the way of our chosen path.

In the approved fascist style they are thinking of raising a volunteer corps to protect their vested interests. Do they not realise the dangers and risks that attend this path of theirs? At the call of the Congress, a million volunteers will rise from the villages of the United Provinces. If they invite a conflict on this bill that is before the U.P. Assembly, they may have to struggle to retain even a semblance of the zamindari system.

It is interesting to note that the millowners of Cawnpore are joining with these big zamindars and taluqdars. Faced by a general strike[3] in Cawnpore, they are joining hands with all the reactionary elements in the province and making wild charges of Moscow gold flowing to India.[4] I should like them to substantiate these charges. The Congress in the U.P. is supporting and will continue to support both the workers of Cawnpore and the peasant masses of the province. I hope that wiser counsels will prevail with the industrial and landed magnates of the U.P. and their wild outbursts will not produce any harm. In any event, we are prepared for all eventualities.

I am sorry I am leaving India at this stage, but I shall carry the picture of the U.P. peasants and workers in my mind and shall look forward to the day, not far distant, when I can devote my energies to their cause. Meanwhile, I am quite confident that the United Provinces Congress organisation is quite capable of looking after itself and of serving effectively the peasantry and workers in our province.

3. Since the employers association did not accept the recommendations of the labour enquiry committee, the mill workers of Kanpur went on strike from 16 May 1938 and within a few days the entire textile industry was paralysed.
4. Jwala Prasad Srivastava said at the conference that Soviet gold was flowing into the country and the labourers were pursuing the policy of communists.

5

PROBLEMS OF CONGRESS ORGANISATION

1. Publicity to Congress Resolutions[1]

Allahabad
January 2nd, 1937

Dear Comrade,
The Faizpur Congress is over and now we have to get down to work to carry out the directions of the Congress. For the next six weeks or so most of us will be busy with the provincial elections, but that does not mean that we should postpone activity in regard to the other resolutions of the Congress. Indeed many of these resolutions lay down the Congress policy on important and vital matters and should therefore be placed before the electorate and the public. At the numerous public meetings that are being held in connection with the elections attention should be drawn to these resolutions of the Congress. The election manifesto should, of course, always be kept in the foreground. Particular attention should be invited to the following resolutions:

(1) Elections and constituent assembly—This resolution,[2] as embodying the Congress policy in regard to the elections, should be clearly explained and the implications of the constituent assembly to frame a constitution for a free India pointed out. It should be stated that this constituent assembly is very different from an all parties conference. It will be a grand panchayat of the nation, elected on an adult franchise, meeting when the reality of power has already shifted to the people so that they can give effect to their decisions without any interference from outside authority. It will be the only proper method of establishing a free democratic state for which the Congress stands.

(2) Convention—The idea of this convention[3] should be explained. It is not a substitute for the constituent assembly but a preparation for it, as well as for a disciplined and effective fight against the federal structure and the rest of the new Act.

(3) Suppression of civil liberties and detenus—This suppression and the detenu question must always be emphasized before the public so that a strong public opinion against them may be built up.

1. Circular to P.C.Cs. A.I.C.C. File No. P-1/1937-38, pp. 219-222, N.M.M.L.
2. The resolution reiterated the "entire rejection of the Government of India Act of 1935", described any cooperation with the constitution as a "betrayal of India's struggle for freedom", and called upon all the Congress candidates to carry on the election campaign strictly in accordance with the election manifesto issued by the A.I.C.C.
3. See pp. 60-71.

(4) Agrarian programme—Although this is a provisional programme, it has great importance and the vast body of our rural electors and others will appreciate it. It should therefore find prominent place in our election campaign, especially in rural areas.

(5) War danger and frontier policy—The importance of preparing the public mind on the possibility of imperialist war and our resistance to it must always be kept in view. This requires widespread and ceaseless propaganda. As for the frontier policy of the government, there is little realization of the injury this has done, and is doing, to India as well as her trans-border neighbours. It is desirable, therefore, that the public should realise this danger and injury.

(6) Non-participation in the Coronation and other imperialist functions[4]—This resolution is important and it is essential that all Congressmen should always keep it in mind. No Congressman can take part in any official or semi-official functions which go to strengthen British imperialism. In doubtful cases it is better to err on the side of non-participation than on the other side. In such cases reference can be made to our office.

Special attention must be drawn to the possibility of Coronation functions being held here. Every such function, whatever it may be, must be avoided. Probably there will be no Coronation celebrations in India for many months, but it is nevertheless desirable to educate public opinion on this subject from now onwards.

(7) Hartal on April 1st—The hartal, which the Congress has fixed for April 1st, is intimately connected with our agitation against the new Act. It should, therefore, be made a part of our election campaign and the country should be fully prepared for it. Detailed directions for it will probably be issued later, but the general idea of this hartal should be popularised from now onwards.

Printed copies of Congress resolutions are being sent to you.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. The Coronation of George VI was to take place on 12 May 1937. The Congress decided not to participate in the celebrations; this was "in no way intended to express any ill will or discourtesy to the King's person."

2. Importance of Mass Contacts[1]

Allahabad
January 2nd, 1937

Dear Comrade,
I should like to draw your special attention to the Congress constitution and mass contacts resolution[2] passed by the Faizpur Congress. By this resolution a committee[3] has been appointed to revise the constitution with a view to democratise the Congress still further. This committee would like your cooperation in this matter and any suggestions received will be carefully considered. It might be desirable for your P.C.C. to appoint a small sub-committee for the purpose. Reports and suggestions should reach us by the 31st March 1937.

Pending such constitutional changes, the Congress has suggested that a wider basis should be given to the Congress by making the primary unit a village or a *mohalla*. This can be done even under the existing all-India constitution, though it may be necessary to alter some provincial constitutions for the purpose. If so, I trust you will take early steps to make the necessary changes in your provincial constitution. We hope that these village and *mohalla* committees will be functioning by the end of June 1937.

Under the terms of this resolution each P.C.C. has to appoint an organising secretary. Such a secretary should preferably be a wholetime worker. Kindly let us know soon what you propose to do in the matter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Circular to P.C.Cs. A.I.C.C. File No. P-1/1937-38, pp. 217-218, N.M.M.L.
2. This resolution emphasised the need for "increasing the association of the masses with the Congress organization" and "giving opportunities to the primary members to initiate and consider Congress policies and programme."
3. Rajendra Prasad, Jairamdas Doulatram and Jayaprakash Narayan were the members of this committee.

3. Celebration of Independence Day[1]

Allahabad
January 2/11, 1937

Dear Comrade,
I write to remind you of the approach of January 26th—Independence Day. The fact of elections must not come in the way of this important celebration. Indeed the celebration should help us in our election work. In the event of polling actually taking place in some places on that day, suitable variations in the manner of celebrations should be made, but in any event the day must be celebrated. To permit of local variations no detailed directions are being sent, and local committees can frame their own programmes. The essential part of it is the holding of a meeting in the afternoon or evening and the repetition, by those attending, of the independence pledge of 1930 with certain inevitable variations. The last paragraph of this pledge relating to civil disobedience has been left out, and a few lines added at the end.[2]

In the morning, there should be a formal hoisting of the national flag, with appropriate ceremony. Householders and shopkeepers should also be encouraged to put up or hang national flags. An attempt should be made to have these celebrations on an extensive scale, so as to reach even remote villages.

A copy of the pledge[3] is enclosed.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Circular to P.C.Cs. A.I.C.C. File No. P-I/1937-38, pp. 209-210, N.M.M.L.
2. The pledge issued on the eve of the salt satyagraha in 1930 had contained references to that movement and to the moral and material injury done to the country under British imperialism. These references were deleted from the pledge and the following lines were added to it: "We recognise that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. India has gained strength and self-reliance and marched a long way to Swaraj following peaceful and legitimate methods, and it is by adhering to these methods that our country will attain independence. We pledge ourselves anew to the Independence of India and solemnly resolve to carry on non-violently the struggle for freedom till Purna Swaraj is attained."
3. Not printed.

4. The Ban on Independence Pledge[1]

I find that some provincial governments have banned the publication of the independence pledge. So far as I know, this is the first time that this pledge has been banned, although it has been used and repeated often during the past seven years. It is evident that the tremendous mass enthusiasm for the Congress, which is evident everywhere, has upset the nerves of these governments. For the piesent, it is not our policy or desire to commit breaches of such orders, and so where there is a ban, it is desirable not to use this particular pledge or form of words, but the Independence Day meetings must be held widely and a brief pledge reiterating the old pledge should be taken.

1. Statement to the press, Kanpur, 24 January 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 25 January 1937.

5. On Understanding Congress Policy[1]

Allahabad
March 3, 1937

Dear Comrade,
I should like to draw your particular attention to the series of resolutions passed by the Working Committee at Wardha recently. You must have seen these resolutions in the press and they will be sent to you soon from our office. These resolutions give a definite and clear lead to the Congress organisation and to the country generally in regard to our future work and policy both inside the legislatures and outside. Final decisions about this policy will no doubt be taken by the A.I.C.C. in Delhi but, whatever the decision on the question of ministries might be, this general background of our policy is clear and is bound to remain. Therefore every newly elected Congress member of the legislatures as well as all other Congress workers should be fully acquainted with it and should act up to it. You will therefore kindly take immediate steps to inform all such persons as well as all Congress committees in your jurisdiction of these resolutions. At the next meeting of your provincial Congress committee these resolutions should be read out.

1. Circular to P.C.Cs. A.I.C.C. File No. P-I/1936, p. 7, N.M.M.L.

In particular, I should like to draw your attention, and through you that of all Congressmen in your province, to the immediate necessity of our organisational work being carried on in rural and other areas at almost the same tempo as during election time. The elected members have a special responsibility for this in their own constituencies. They should also see to it that the people in their areas are not harassed or ill-treated because of their support of the Congress in the elections and every such case should be investigated.

Recently hail and frost have done great damage to crops in north India and the peasantry in these areas are alarmed and distressed. In all such cases, Congress workers and Congress members of legislatures should make personal enquiries and help the peasantry in putting forward demands for remission and other forms of help to relieve their distress.

Leaders and members of Congress parliamentary parties should remember that we can enter into no alliances with other groups, nor can we negotiate with the government or their representatives in regard to our future work in the legislatures. So long as the A.I.C.C. has not definitely laid down its directions, no such conversations can serve any useful purpose. In the event of any particular developments taking place, the matter should be referred to us to ensure that an identical and uniform policy is followed everywhere.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

6. To Gopichand Bhargava[1]

Allahabad
March 5, 1937

My dear Dr. Gopichand,

Kripalaniji has shown me your letter[2] to him. I have taken the trouble to go into this matter and I must confess that the more I look into it the more it disgusts me. Punjab politics seem to have got into such a hopeless state of mess that nothing but a major operation is likely to put them on right lines. The Congress in the Punjab simply means a

1. A.I.C.C. File No. E-17(i)/1936, p. 119, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter of 27 February 1937, he wrote that Ruplal Puri, president of the Amritsar Congress Committee, and his followers had worked against the Congress candidate in the assembly elections and had been carrying on a "false and disgraceful propaganda" against him.

handful of persons in a few cities, and that handful quarrelling continuously. The last elections showed us where the Congress was strong and where it was weak. Nowhere in India have we got such a thing as a typical pro-government party like the Unionist Party gaining so much support in the province.[3] I must confess that I have not quite got over the fact that the key seats in the Punjab were left uncontested by us. It is my belief that we could have captured almost every rural seat in the Punjab, Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh, if we had approached the peasantry on right lines.

The Congress does not even go near the peasantry in the Punjab and in the cities it is busy with personal squabbles.

In your letter you point out that those who are conspicuous by their absence at the time of action come out when the question of holding office in the Congress is concerned. This is perfectly true. But in the Punjab, do you not think that it applies in equal measure to both rival groups? I have been reading posters issued in Amritsar. I find it difficult to decide which side has succeeded in issuing the more objectionable posters.

I am writing to the Punjab P.C.C. in regard to these Amritsar matters and I shall pursue this question further. Regarding Ruplal Puri it is quite possible that the present Punjab P.C.C. is partial to him. But I must say that my own efforts to get at solid facts about him have not succeeded. It is no good saying vaguely that he has been opposing the Congress candidate. It does not even carry me very far if I am told that he informed Malaviyaji that Keshoram had better chances. All this may be undesirable, but it does not give me solid ground for disciplinary action. I am perfectly prepared to take such action if I am given the facts. But in spite of every attempt, such facts are not supplied to me. Thus it is not just the question of the Punjab P.C.C. not acting.

I have today had a long talk with representatives of Dr. Santram's party.[4] They have given me their version. Even according to this version they have made any number of mistakes. No doubt the other party must have made an equal number or perhaps more mistakes. I am asking for an explanation of all these matters.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. It had won 96 out of 175 seats in the Punjab Assembly. The Congress had won only 18 of the 29 seats contested by it.
4. Santram Seth, Sohan Singh Josh and Master Purnanand had formed a rival Congress committee in Amritslr opposing the committee headed by Ruplal Puri.

7. To Mahatma Gandhi[1]

Allahabad
March 8, 1937

My dear Bapu,

I have your letter of the 5th March enquiring about khadi at exhibitions.[2] This matter has been repeatedly discussed by us in the course of the past year ever since my return from Europe. The U.P. Provincial Congress Committee organised one or two exhibitions two or three years back. Since then they have not repeated this. But occasionally some of our district committees organise exhibitions. Even this has grown rarer now. Exhibitions organised by swadeshi sabhas however continue. Last November the Allahabad Swadeshi League had their annual exhibition. As usual they exhibited mill cloth. They wanted me to open the exhibition. For several months I refused to agree because of this khadi matter. Ultimately however I agreed to do so for various reasons chiefly local. I felt that my refusal would be misinterpreted and would do us some injury. In my opening speech there I dealt largely with this question of khadi.

The question you have put is not easy to answer. The average khadi worker seems to be of the opinion that khadi should not be exhibited if mill cloth is allowed there. Other Congress workers are usually of a contrary opinion on the ground that at such exhibitions there is usually a good sale of khadi. Obviously the opinion of the khadi worker who is presumed to be an expert at his job and who is anxious to push khadi should be almost final. I would, therefore, hesitate to give my decision against him unless I succeed in convincing him. I imagine that from a certain long-distance view it is better even to incur some loss now so as to avoid producing any confusion in the public mind as to what khadi is and what it is not. This can only be done by adherence to the present policy of banning uncertified khadi sales in such exhibitions.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-27/1937, pp. 521-523, N.M.M.L.
2. Mahatma Gandhi had written: "As you may remember, the policy of the A.I.S.A. has invariably been not to exhibit khadi at exhibitions held under the aegis of the Congress and accepting Indian mill cloth as exhibits there....A reference has already been made to khadi workers in other provinces and they tell me that lifting the bar will certainly damage khadi because they argue that the public will never be able to understand the distinction between khadi and mill cloth if both are exhibited at Congress exhibition stalls. I hold this argument to be conclusive...."

At the same time I find that uncertified khadi is sold at such exhibitions and plenty of people patronise it. There are quite large numbers of people, as you know, who are not particularly keen on buying certified khadi, but who are prepared to do so if it comes their way. The point is: are we to cater for these people in any special measure or are we to concentrate on holding fast to those who desire to use pure khadi only? This question has not only its business side but its psychological side also. Khadi has, on the one hand, built up a firm foundation for itself and there is a body of men in the country who must have pure khadi, whatever the cost or the trouble. At the same time, khadi does not spread as rapidly as it might among other classes who only occasionally patronise it. For khadi workers the object should be to develop the khadi habit in the latter. That habit comes largely from appeals to the mind or heart and partly from sheer habit. Ordinarily speaking, it would be a good thing to have as many casual purchasers as possible so that they may get used to buying and wearing khadi and thus develop the real habit. The present policy, to some extent, keeps away this casual purchaser and thus reduces the field from which regular khadi buyers might be drawn.

In regard to these exhibitions there is another difficulty. Often enough there is no real supervision over the stuffs that come in and textiles made of foreign yarn are taken, or even some stuffs which are largely foreign and have just a bit of Indian material and work on them. This may perhaps be got over with a more stringent control. But the usual Swadeshi league committee is not frightfully keen over this matter.

Swadeshi exhibitions often raise other issues also which cannot be ignored. For instance, last year I decided to open it because I felt that any other decision on my part would have given rise to some trouble and bitterness and thus would have come in the way of our work.

Therefore if you want my final opinion I cannot give it very definitely, and because of my not being so definite I must respect the opinions of others who are working for khadi. I am however inclined to think that it might be preferable to allow khadi to be exhibited and sold in these exhibitions under certain conditions which would prevent as far as possible (1) something else being mistaken for khadi and the distinction between khadi and mill cloth being clearly preserved, (2) the exclusion of partly foreign stuffs from the exhibitions.

I have just this morning returned from Lucknow. I hope to be here for the next six days. On the 14th I go to Delhi where I hope to meet you on the 15th. In Delhi I shall be staying at Ansari's house.

My mother is improving, I think, though the process is so slow it is hardly perceptible.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Shankerlal direct.

Yours affectionately,
Jawahar

8. To Shahid Suhrawardy[1]

Allahabad
March 10, 1937

My dear Shahid,[2]

It was good to hear from you after these many years.[3] It must be nearly ten years since we met. When I was in prison I heard vaguely that you had come to India. Since then I have occasionally heard of you and when I went to Calcutta I wondered if I would be able to meet you. But I was so terribly occupied and I suppose your heavy academic duties kept you away.

I was very glad to learn that you were being put up as a candidate on behalf of the Congress and I am sorry that you did not succeed. It is obvious that this was due to the indiscipline of the Congress people. Bengal politics have long been in a terribly muddled state. One might almost despair of them. But still one dare not despair at any time about anything.

I like your phrase about me: "One whose unparalleled personal sincerity envelops his political doctrines".[4] This sounds so nice. But what exactly does it mean is more than I can say. However I shall feel warm and comfortable, wrapped up in this unparalleled ferment.

With good wishes to you,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(i)/1937, p. 389, N.M.M.L.
2. (1890-1965); professor of Islamic studies, Visvabharati, 1926-32; professor of comparative fine arts at Calcutta University, 1932-43; visiting professor at Columbia University, U.S.A., 1953; later served as Pakistan's ambassador to Spain and other countries.
3. He had written that he had been defeated in the election to the Bengal Council "due to the bungling of the leaders and the indiscipline of the Congress elected members."
4. He wrote: "Like the rest of the world I have been following your extraordinary output of talent and energy but Bibi...and I often talk of you as one whose unparalleled personal sincerity envelops his political doctrines....Please do not look upon this as individualistic heresy; it is the foundation of my affection and admiration for you."

9. To Subhas Chandra Bose[1]

Allahabad
April 16, 1937

My dear Subhas,

I got your letter[2] of 11th April. I am answering it briefly as I am still more or less bed-ridden.

I am quite sure that the Working Committee will gladly give you full support in your attempts to put an end to the long-standing disputes and divisions in Bengal Congress politics. Generally speaking it is the policy of the Working Committee not to interfere in local disputes but leave them entirely to the province. In Bengal specially the Working Committee has not had the least desire to interfere. But when big groups come into conflict and the P.C.C. itself just holds the balance between the two and matters are continually being referred to us by both groups, it becomes impossible to remain silent. Even so, I think you will find that the attention of the P.C.C. has been drawn to the complaints and they have themselves been asked to deal with them. During the last few months we have received a large number of complaints, notably from Tipperah, and all these have been forwarded to the B.P.C.C.

There was one matter about the election of the A.I.C.C. from Bengal which *prima facie* seemed to be wrong in so far as the counting of votes is concerned. We asked for an explanation from the B.P.C.C. None came for a long time. The matter was, therefore, put up before the Working Committee and, with Sarat's concurrence, a recount was suggested. Later, an explanation came and so we have kept the matter pending for further inquiry.

Last year I issued a circular to all provinces discouraging local complaints being made to the A.I.C.C. and emphasizing that all such matters must be dealt with by the P.C.Cs except in rare instances. You will remember another difficulty. The Bengal P.C.C. has in the past

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-5/1937, pp. 591-595, N.M.M.L.
2. Bose had written: "You know all about the quarrels in Bengal in recent years. Their roots have gone deep. The differences centre round personalities and it is difficult to discover any principles underlying them. After my release all the groups have offered to work with me....I can think of handling provincial affairs only if I feel that I shall have the full support of the Working Committee and the different groups will cooperate among themselves—and not merely with me—in carrying out future programme...."

hardly been a properly constituted body because there were no proper elections for many years. That difficulty should not arise now.

It seems to me that the best approach to the Muslim masses should be directly through local Congress committees. Kisan sabhas may be organised where necessary. But where this is done by semi-Congress people it leads to conflict. Where the same persons function in both organisations it makes little difference. But the real point is that you should have an effective agrarian programme. If this is good enough it will draw the Muslim masses. If the Congress can adopt it, it is desirable that it should do so.

In regard to disciplinary action, I think that flagrant cases of indiscipline should be dealt with. But too much of disciplinary action sometimes creates the impression of an inquisition.

It seems to me undesirable for prominent Congressmen to form a regular party with non-Congressmen in the assembly.[3] The question is not free from difficulty but I think you should at least point out to these persons that their action is not proper and it does not fit in with their position in the Congress. I understand that Bankim Mukherjee[4] is the vice-president of the Bengal P.C.C. It is open to them to confer with other labour and peasant members but to have a regular party is definitely undesirable. It may be necessary to ask them later on to resign from office in any executive committees of the Congress. For the present do not take any extreme step.

It is difficult to give a general opinion on this question.[5] Each case must be dealt with on its merits. Obviously it will be desirable for you to interest yourself personally in these matters. At the same time it may be difficult to postpone consideration of all the disputes for many months. You and your committee must decide what is best. If complaints are made to us, we shall refer them back to you but it may be that an urgent complaint may require quick decision. Perhaps it will facilitate your own work later to have an inquiry committee to go into the matter and report to you.

3. Bankim Mukherjee and Niharendu Dutt Majumdar, elected to the provincial assembly as United Front candidates with Congress help, had formed a Parliamentary Peasant and Labour Party with some non-Congress legislators. Bose wrote to Jawaharlal that "they do not accept the Congress whip any longer."
4. (1897-1961); one of the founder-members of All India Kisan Sabha in 1936; a Communist Party member of the Bengal Council, 1936 and Bengal Assembly, 1952-57; deputy leader of the opposition in Bengal Assembly, 1957-61.
5. Bose wanted Jawaharlal to advise him in regard to the large number of disputes about the constitution of district Congress committees, pending before the provincial Congress committee.

This again is difficult for me to advise as so much depends on local circumstances.[6] Ordinarily it is bad for elections to be postponed and yet special cases require special remedies. As a matter of fact, new elections will have to take place everywhere in the course of the next six months or so. As I have stated above, in this and other matters we want to leave the decisions in the hands of the P.C.C. But sometimes when reference is made to us we have to abide by the letter of the constitution. If you yourself take all these matters into consideration and then decide or, when necessary, make your own recommendations to the Working Committee, there should be little difficulty.

I might inform you that most of us feel that the present Congress constitution requires many alterations in regard to elections, etc. A committee has been appointed for the purpose. We want these elections to start from the primary village committees.

I have long felt that a desirable change in Bengal would be to make the city of Calcutta a separate province like Bombay. At present Calcutta politics and sometimes corporation politics overshadow Bengal's problems. A separation of the two would help you to develop that healthy agrarian problem of the Bengal districts. This separation can only take place with the consent of Bengal Congressmen. I spoke to Sarat about this and he seemed to be agreeable. I have found most people from the Bengal districts to agree to this proposal. Perhaps you could circularise your districts about it.

There is one important matter to which I should like to draw your special attention. This is the question of disciplinary action against Nalini Ranjan Sarkar.[7] I am sorry there has been so much delay in this matter. This is having a bad effect in other provinces. The case is an obvious and flagrant one requiring immediate and strong action. I hope that you will see that this is done soon.

I understand that you might be going to Dalhousie soon. If you go there while I am in Allahabad, I hope you will break journey here. My programme is to remain here till the 24th April when I go to Wardha for the Working Committee, returning on the 29th. On the 4th May I sail from Calcutta for Rangoon.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

6. Bose feared that if elections took place in his absence for the remaining district Congress committees, the factional disputes would grow. He therefore sought Jawaharlal's advice whether elections should be postponed.
7. For joining the Bengal ministry formed by the Krishak Party and the Muslim League.

10. To B. Raja Bhushanarao[1]

Allahabad
May 5, 1937

Dear Comrade,[2]
I received some time ago your letter[3] without date in which you have drawn my attention to the widening gulf in Andhra between socialists and other Congressmen. I am sorry that owing to my illness, and later the Working Committee meeting, I could not answer it earlier.

The general question you have raised is important and deserving of our careful attention. While it is inevitable that in a great and widespread movement like ours, differences of opinion arise and sometimes there is a pull in different directions, it is obviously undesirable and injurious to our cause if these differences affect our action and promote indiscipline in our ranks. To prevent or, at any rate, to mitigate this evil we can issue general directions and see that they are obeyed. We must also examine specific causes and instances of conflict in action and try to lay down a correct course of action in regard to them.

One of these specific matters has been the use, on occasion, of the red flag. On this question I have recently issued a circular letter[4] to all provincial Congress committees and this has found publicity in the press. So I shall not say anything further about this matter.

In Andhra, so far as I know, there are, quite apart from members of the Congress Socialist Party, individual unattached persons calling themselves socialists who frequently act in an indisciplined manner. I believe that some months back there was some conflict between these individuals and the Socialist Party and the latter took action against them.

It is difficult to deal with the matter properly except in the case of specific instances which can be investigated and, if necessary, action taken. If such instances are brought to our notice, we shall certainly enquire into these and take other steps. In your letter you mention certain such matters. The reference to the recent assembly elections is vague and I am afraid nothing can be done about them now.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-3(i)/1937-38, pp. 269-271, N.M.M.L.
2. Secretary, West Godavari District Congress Committee.
3. He had written that during the elections the socialists had carried on propaganda for Congress candidates as a different group. On 1 April the socialists and non-socialists had taken out two different processions and shouted slogans against each other. He added: "Some Congress Socialists seem to develop a class mentality from which they want to look upon others as untouchables."
4. See *post*, section 8, item 1.

As regards April 1st, I am surprised to learn that the Andhra P.C.C. circulated for adoption a resolution other than that issued by me for the whole country.[5] This seems to me very improper for the P.C.C. The resolution I had issued as President was issued to ensure uniformity all over India. It was issued after consultation with the Working Committee. It was in almost the identical language used by the All India Convention in Delhi, and it was the duty of every P.C.C. to adopt it in its entirety without any change whatever. In this matter I am enquiring from the Andhra P.C.C., but from what you have written it appears that those who objected to the P.C.C. resolution were clearly right.

As for the red flag being used in the procession on that day, the use of it was improper in a Congress procession. If other groups or organisations, such as labour or peasant groups, as such, wanted to carry the red flag somewhere in the procession where they were marching, they could do so. But this implied that some non-Congress or semi-Congress groups were joining and cooperating with a Congress procession. Even so, the red flag could not be displayed prominently. The dominant and obvious flag in every Congress procession must be the national flag. There must be no rivalry between the two and no confusion on this issue in the public mind. Those who join a Congress procession must agree to treat it as such and not to do anything to it which makes it some other kind of procession.

I do not know why the Andhra P.C.C. prohibited speeches on April 1st. They were not prohibited elsewhere and I see no reason why there should have been such prohibition. But if a P.C.C. definitely issues such a direction, it should certainly be obeyed. Not to obey it is to promote indiscipline.

The slogan which you say was used by some socialists on that day was objectionable. The fact that two meetings were held and two processions taken out was also very objectionable. If this kind of thing continues and develops, it is bound to put an end to all possibility of united action.

It is difficult to lay down any general rule about slogans. Some are good, some bad, some on the border line. Some latitude may be allowed to a crowd, indeed it has to be allowed, but this must not mean the encouragement of slogans which are in effect an attack on the Congress.

5. The resolution issued by Jawaharlal read: "In order to demonstrate effectively the will of the Indian people to resist the imposition of the unwanted Constitution and as an earnest of their determination to launch a powerful mass movement for its destruction, the Congress issues a call for a nation-wide hartal or general strike on April 1, the day on which the new Constitution is to be inaugurated."

As the subject you have raised is important, I am sending a copy of this letter to the secretary of the Andhra P.C.C.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

11. To Secretary, Madras Provincial Varnashrama Swarajya Sangha[1]

Allahabad
June 19, 1937

Dear Sir,
On my return from Burma and Malaya I received your letter[2] of the 9th June together with its enclosures. The statement[3] that I issued some time back regarding the Congress policy towards religion is a correct statement of the Congress position in so far as the Karachi Congress laid it down. The Congress stands for the free exercise of religion and for freedom of conscience subject to public order and morality.

You have however sought to extend this definition so as to prevent the Congress from considering questions of untouchability, temple entry and the like. You should know that this is a totally unjustified interpretation of the Congress position, and the removal of untouchability in all its forms has been one of the fundamental planks of the Congress for many years past. It is obvious that your conception of religion includes in it the forcible suppression by law and otherwise of other people to conform to your own opinion in the matter. That is the very reverse of what the Congress thinks and lays down in regard to religious freedom. The very idea of untouchability is one which offends against the Karachi resolution on fundamental rights. It offends against freedom of religion. It is open for an individual, if he objects to mixing with any other group, to retire to some place where he may live apart from the world. He may go to the Himalayas or to some island in the

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-19(ii)/1937, pp. 199-201, N.M.M.L.
2. He complained that Rajagopalachari, leader of the Congress organisation and of the ministry in Madras, was acting against the policy of the Congress by supporting the temple entry proclamation and other purely religious issues.
3. See pp. 125-129.

sea. It is not open to him, in order to please himself, to impose his will on large numbers of others and prevent them from taking their share in social life. If any member of your organisation objects to meeting untouchables, the Congress does not force him to meet them. He can pray in solitude in his own house or wherever else he pleases. But if your organisation, on the other hand, seeks to compel others to conform to your way of thinking in the matter of religion, then it goes beyond its function and, according to my way of thinking, beyond public order and morality.

It is obvious that there may be a difference of opinion on this issue as there is between you and me. I have not a shadow of doubt that you are hopelessly in error and it surprises me that anybody should think in terms which are repugnant to me because they are based on the suppression of human beings by others of their kind. How should these questions then be decided? Obviously the democratic way of settling these questions is for the majority to decide. I am perfectly prepared to accept the verdict of the Hindu majority on this issue when the time comes. When we have the power to do so, we shall no doubt consult the people concerned and abide by their decision in the matter. Meanwhile, it is open to all of us to carry on propaganda on behalf of the policy we approve of. That policy in so far as I am concerned is one of complete and absolute removal of untouchability in all shapes and forms.

In this matter it is evident that we differ, and as I have stated above the only way to settle it is democratically. To enable such a settlement to take place we must work for a free India, whatever our opinions on these questions might be.

I have therefore to inform you that in this matter I am entirely in agreement with Mr. C. Rajagopalachari.[4]

Yours truly,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. In his letter of 3 May 1937 to the secretary of Swarajya Sangha, Rajagopalachari maintained that "the Travancore Temple Entry Proclamation is a good and noble act....Pt. Jawaharlal's opinion that the Congress is a purely political organisation is quite right and does not affect the situation as regards what Hindus should do as Hindus and lovers of Hinduism. Some of us are not only Congressmen. We have also other interests in life besides politics. Moreover, the contribution that Hindus should make to politics is inextricably mixed with their attitude towards a better ordering of Hindu society."

12. To Ohabali Khan[1]

Allahabad
June 19, 1937

Dear Comrade,[2]
I have just received your letter. I am surprised to learn that the district Congress committee discarded the suggestion to hoist the national flag on the day of Deshbandhu's death anniversary. Without enquiring from them as to why this was so I cannot express any final opinion. But it was eminently fit that on such a day the flag should be hoisted.

As regards the *kirtan* and sweets distribution, I think you have misunderstood their purpose. A *kirtan* is a singing of music of an entirely inoffensive character and people of other faiths often attend it. It is true that it is a Bengali Hindu custom which is often given effect to at death anniversaries. Personally I am not interested in it. But I think there is no harm in it if people wish to have it. I do not think you can say that it is an intrusion of religion. I think that it would be better on such occasions for individuals, if they so wish it, to arrange for such music, and not for Congress committees to arrange the function. But this is my personal opinion and I do not think it will be right to impose it on others. You are right in raising an objection to the inclusion of religious ceremonies in any Congress activity. We have to be careful about this. In regard to religion of course we allow perfect freedom. But it is desirable that the Congress as such should not organise religious functions. Sometimes, however, especially when prominent Congressmen die or there are death anniversaries, one cannot ignore the sentiment of the people and some such thing as *kirtan* takes place and Congressmen join it.

As you know, it has long been the custom for both Hindus and Muslims to join each other's festivals like the *Diwali*, *Dasehra*, the *Id* and others. They do not join the religious part of it, but for the social part of it. It is desirable that there should be this common intercourse to promote comradely feelings.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-5/1937, pp. 523-524, N.M.M.L.
2. A Congressman of Barisal, now in Bangladesh.

13. To Suresh Majumdar[1]

Allahabad
June 20, 1937

Dear Comrade,

Your letter[2] of May 15th met me here on my return from my tour. You have raised an interesting question about the ethics and the policy which should govern nationalist journals. I can only briefly give you my personal opinion on the subject. Every newspaper has an obvious duty to its readers to give all kinds of news to enable them to come to right conclusions about it. Any deliberate suppression of news for fear of government displeasure or for any other reason offends against the principles which should govern the life of a journalist. He should be prepared to give publicity to anything that is really news even though he may not approve of it.

That is the theory of it and the more it is translated into practice the better. But inevitably in practice many other considerations come into play and a journalist will judge the value of news from his own standpoint and will give such importance to the news in his display as he thinks it deserves. It is well known that even by headlines and general display the value of a news-item can be increased or decreased. Obviously a journalist who holds by a certain policy, for instance Indian nationalism and freedom, will like to give publicity to matters which help the nationalist cause. He should not suppress other matters but his stress will be different.

In regard to the Coronation, everything depends on the stress that a newspaper gave to it. To attach too much importance to such an event, with all its attendant ceremonies and pomp and circumstance, seems to me, quite apart from the Congress attitude in the matter, undesirable as this turns the public mind from important questions and policies to shows and demonstrations. Personally I have no interest whatever in it and I confess that I have not read either in the newspapers here or in the newspapers I got from England any full account of the Coronation. The subject did not interest me in the slightest. What did interest me was the political implication of the Coronation and how it was sought by

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-5/1937, pp. 509-513, N.M.M.L.
2. He had drawn Jawaharlal's attention to an editorial in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of 15 May 1937, criticising the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* for not publishing any news about the Coronation of George VI.

this to raise up the somewhat fading prestige of royalty. There is no reason why we should be parties to this organised effort to boom up royalty. There seems to me an element of vulgarity about it all.

What I have written above has hardly anything to do with the Congress resolution on non-participation in the Coronation activities. So that even apart from the Congress attitude, I would have preferred intelligent newspapers to deal with the Coronation briefly and without indulging in too much sentiment or sob-stuff. The Congress attitude, however, drew pointed attention to the political aspect of all these celebrations and how capital was made out of them by British imperialism in India. That is an important matter and it is the business of the journalists in India not to be made tools by British imperialism in this respect. While therefore giving important news in their columns they should take every care not to boom up this imperialism by the kind of news that often comes through. If I had been in charge of newspapers, I would have dealt with Coronation news on this basis. That is, important news would have been given but long and futile accounts of the pomp and pageantry and of the dresses worn would have been omitted. I would have sought to point out to my readers the inner significance of all this pomp and show and how every effort was being made by modern means of publicity to whip up enthusiasm for monarchy. The recent abdication of ex-King Edward was a blow to the monarchy in England.[3] Because of this it became necessary to shout even more loudly at the time of the Coronation. There is no reason whatever why we in India should be swept off our feet or lose our sense of proportion because of this widespread publicity in England. And newspapers should help the public in retaining a correct perspective.

I gather that the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* has not given much importance in its columns to the Coronation celebrations. It deserves to be commended for this sound attitude.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. King Edward VIII had abdicated on 11 December 1936 on the issue of his marriage to Mrs. Simpson.

14. The Congress and Labour and Peasant Organisations[1]

Since my return from Burma and Malaya I have received many letters from Congress committees and Congressmen enquiring about the duty of Congressmen towards labour and peasant organisations. Should these organisations be encouraged or not? And, if so, what form should they take, what relation, if any, should they bear to the Congress? These problems have arisen in many provinces and they require our serious consideration. Sometimes these problems are largely personal, sometimes they are mainly provincial, but behind them always there is the larger issue. In dealing with the local aspects of the problem, we must inevitably consider these peculiarities and even personalities. But we must be clear about the principles and the real issues before we lose ourselves in the forest of local detail.

How has this problem arisen? Not surely just because of a few persons acting in a particular way, but because of the dynamics of the very struggle in which we are engaged. It is a sign of our growth and the rising consciousness of the masses. For that growth the National Congress is mainly responsible and to it therefore must go the credit in a large measure for this new mass consciousness. The Congress has worked for it and if success comes to it, Congressmen must not fight shy of this. Therefore this new development is to be welcomed even though it might bring some occasional complications with it.

These complications are to some extent inherent in the situation. The Congress is predominantly a political organisation representing the urge of all classes of Indians towards national freedom. A labour or peasant organisation is essentially a group or class organisation primarily interested in the welfare and advancement of that group or class. The Congress thinks and acts mainly on the political plane, the workers' organisation on the functional and economic plane. Yet the differences are not so great as one would imagine and the development of our struggle and of political consciousness brings the two close to each other and they overlap to a considerable extent. The Congress, because of its close touch with the masses, because indeed it is by far the biggest mass organisation in the country, inevitably begins to think and act in terms of the

1. Article written on 28 June 1937. *The Bombay Chronlcle*, 2 July 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 213-227.

economic grievances and disabilities of the masses, that is the workers, peasants and others. The labour and peasant organisations are forced to the conclusion that economic disabilities cannot be removed to any large extent unless political freedom is achieved and power comes to the people as a whole. Thus the two overlap and the joint anti-imperialist front grows up.

In any country under alien domination the political aspect always overshadows other aspects. This in itself would make the Congress the dominant organisation in the country, but this predominance has been further intensified by the part that the Congress has played in recent years in our struggle for freedom. The Congress is thus today far and away the most powerful and the most widespread organisation in India; it has tremendous mass appeal and mass support; even the workers and peasants look up to it and are influenced by it far more than by their own class organisations. Other organisations are not even bad seconds. The Congress has obviously not achieved this mass influence and support by its political programme only. It has done so by its magnificent record of service and sacrifice, and by its direct approach to the masses and its increasing economic orientation, which is understood by those masses more than the purely political objective. It is interesting to compare the organisational and basic strength of the Congress in various parts of India. This strength varies directly with this economic orientation and mass contacts.

Thus from the point of view of our freedom struggle, both in its political and economic aspects, it is essential that the Congress should be strengthened. Everything that weakens it, weakens that struggle, and weakens even the workers' and peasants' movements, for neither of these is strong enough to make much headway without Congress support. It is the realisation of this fact that has brought about the demand all over the country, and from all kinds of quarters, for a joint anti-imperialist front under Congress auspices. Indeed the Congress itself is increasingly considered this joint front.

But in spite of all this the Congress remains, and has to remain, a national organisation and it cannot always represent the functional or class interests of the workers and peasants. It cannot function as a trade union or kisan sabha. In actual practice, where its contacts with the peasantry are considerable, it almost functions as a kisan sabha. The general tendency is for the Congress to develop into a predominantly peasant organisation and this process is likely to continue, but the leadership is bound to remain with the middle classes, chiefly the lower middle classes, so long as the Congress remains the National Congress and does not undergo a sea-change into something entirely different.

But these are speculations about the future and it is the present that concerns us. The outstanding facts of the present are: (1) the Congress must be strengthened because it is the only organisation which can lead us effectively to our goal; and (2) the rising consciousness of and ferment among the masses. If these two facts are correlated then we have a powerful movement which grows in strength and leads us to success. This is the basic reason for and the *raison d'etre* of the emphasis that is being laid on mass contacts. And be it remembered that this applies to all—Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian masses. The cleavages of religious faith do not affect this programme at all. We talk loosely sometimes of Muslim mass contacts, but this is not a communal movement dealing with Muslims only. Our programme is identical in this respect for Muslims and Hindus or others; only in order to draw the attention of our workers to work amongst the Muslim masses have we talked of Muslim mass contacts.

Contacts with the masses can be of two kinds: direct contacts by means of Congress members and village committees among the workers and peasants, and contacts with the workers' and peasants' organisations. The first of course is essential and needs no argument. Without it the second does not come into the picture at all, for the second can only be a corollary to the first. If the Congress has not got direct and widespread and deep contacts with the masses, it is bound to be influenced far more by the middle classes and will thus move away to some extent from the mass outlook which it has been its consistent aim to develop. It must, therefore, be the aim of every Congressman, and more specially those who have the interests of labour and the peasantry at heart, to develop these direct contacts by enrolling Congress members from the working classes and establishing village committees.

The second kind of contacts, that is some kind of organisational relation of the Congress with working class organisations, involving functional representation, has been discussed for some time past and is still being discussed. It involves a basic change in the Congress constitution and I do not know when, if ever, it will be given effect to. Personally I am in favour of the principle being admitted and given effect to gradually as the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee has recommended. This will not make much difference to begin with, as the workers' and peasants' unions, which are properly organised and capable of taking advantage of the Congress affiliation, are very limited in number; and then the conditions for affiliation would be laid down by the Congress. But this question does not arise now as the Congress constitution does not permit such affiliation or any kind of functional representation. It is a debatable question and we need not consider it further here. But

this I should like to emphasise again, that those who are in favour of this change cannot bring it about from outside pressure; they can only do so by having a large enough Congress membership of workers and peasants who want such a change. If the outside pressure is at any time great enough to compel the Congress to bow to it against its own will, that will mean that the outside organisations are more powerful than the Congress, and if so why affiliate? But this is a highly unlikely contingency.

While it is true that this question is beyond our purview at present, we see something vaguely similar to it developing all over the country. This is the increasing cooperation in actual work between local Congress committees and working class organisations. Sometimes even joint informal committees have been formed. Often enough the leading spirits of those local organisations are prominent Congressmen and so there is no difficulty in having this cooperation. But there is something more in it than this common link; there is the demand for this cooperation and a realisation that it is highly necessary.

Having laid so much stress on the importance of bringing in workers and peasants directly into the Congress, let us now consider the desirability of having separate working class organisations. There can be no doubt whatever that both industrial workers and peasants have, or ought to have, the inherent right to organise themselves. That is in the nature of a fundamental right which the Congress has repeatedly recognised. There is no room for argument about it. The Congress has gone a step further and encouraged, in theory at least, the formation of such unions.

The case of industrial workers is clearer than that of the peasantry. It seems to me that anyone interested in such labour must come to the conclusion that it is the bounden duty of the workers to organise themselves in trade unions, and for others to help them to do so. The trade union movement is the inevitable counterpart of modern industry; it must grow as industry grows. The Congress with all its mass contacts cannot function as a trade union, and the numerous workers' problems and conflicts that arise can only be dealt with by a trade union. From the point of view of our larger freedom movement also the organisation of workers in trade unions is essential for such organised workers develop strength and momentum and a high degree of political consciousness. Therefore Congressmen should help in the organisation of trade unions, and help also, in so far as they can, in the day to day struggles of the workers. There should be cooperation between the local Congress committee and the trade union. The trade union is of course in no way within the Congress organisation, nor is it subject to official Congress control. But it must recognise that in political matters the lead of the Congress has

to be followed and any other course will prove injurious to the freedom struggle and even to the workers' movement. In economic matters and those relating to workers' grievances, the union can have whatever programme it chooses, even though this may be in advance of the Congress programme. Congressmen, in their individual capacities, can and should be members or friends of the union and as such will of course give it their advice. But a Congress committee as such should not try to control a trade union. Recently a case came to my notice when the Congress committee tried to interfere with the elections to the executive committee of a labour union. This seems to me highly undesirable. It is unbecoming for a Congress committee to do so and unfair to the union. It is bound to lead to conflict or to the conversion of the union into something which is not essentially a labour union. Congressmen, of course, who have served the cause of labour, have every right to take part in the affairs of the union.

Transport workers stand on exactly the same footing as other industrial workers and their organisation in special unions is highly necessary. It is also desirable to organise separately and functionally those workers in cities who carry on particular professions and whose economic interests are allied, such as *tongawalas, thelawalas, ekkawalas, mallahs* (fishermen and boatmen), stone-breakers, petty clerks, press workers, sweepers, and the like. All these should of course be brought directly into the Congress fold as primary members, but they have special problems of their own, and a functional organisation gives them strength and self-reliance. It is easier for them later on to take part in Congress work. This of course presumes that Congressmen are in intimate touch with their special organisations and give them every help in time of need.

Mixed labour unions and mazdur sabhas in a city, consisting of workers from various trades and businesses, are usually not successful. There is no functional unity amongst them, no common urge to cooperation or action; and if a political unity is desired, the Congress is there to give it.

The important problem of the peasantry remains, and this, after all, is the most important of our problems. In the term peasantry, I include the peasant proprietors as well as the tenants, the petty zamindars of the Punjab and elsewhere, the kisans of the U.P. and Bihar, and the *krishaks* of Bengal and Orissa. The same method of treatment will not apply to all these; there will be variations. But, for the moment, I am dealing with the Congress approach to their special organisations.

The Congress has fully recognised the right of the peasantry to organise themselves, and in theory the considerations I have advanced in favour of trade unions apply to them also. But there is a difference. It is relatively easy to organise factory workers and the like; they are a

closely-knit group, working shoulder to shoulder and obviously suffering from common disabilities. It is far more difficult to organise the peasantry, loosely scattered and thinking almost always in terms of the individual and not of the group. We have experienced all these difficulties in the course of our Congress work and thus we find that while Congress influence over the peasantry is very great, our organisational strength among them is much less. Tens of millions look up to the Congress and owe allegiance to it, but the actual membership is counted in hundreds of thousands only.

Where Congress committees are working effectively in village areas, an effective kisan organisation in the same area would largely overlap. There would be duplication of effort and waste of energy. The Congress itself is usually considered by the peasantry as their own organisation, and that is as it should be. Thus we find that in such areas separate kisan organisations have not grown up, although the kisan movement, as a part of the Congress and more or less within its fold, is strong. Where, however, Congress committees are not functioning effectively in the villages, the gap is bound to be filled sooner or later by peasant organisations. The important fact to be borne in mind is that there is deep ferment in the peasantry all over India and a powerful, though partly unconscious, desire on their part to do something to get rid of their many burdens, which have become quite unbearable. Fundamentally this is due to economic conditions, but also there is the fact that the political movement, under the leadership of the Congress, has raised mass consciousness and made them resent many things which they used to bear silently like dumb beasts. They have also had a glimmering of the effectiveness of organisation and united mass action. So they are expectant and if the Congress call does not reach their ears, some other will, and they will respond to it. But the call that will find echo in their hearts must deal with their own sufferings and the way to get rid of them.

Because of this we find today all manner of strange people, who have never had anything to do with the peasantry before, talking in terms of economic programmes and trying in their uncouth way to woo the peasantry. Even political reactionaries of the deepest dye discuss unctuously agrarian programmes. Nothing will or can come out of this, for far-reaching agrarian reform will never come out of political reaction. But this attitude of theirs shows us the way the wind blows.

This wind is blowing to the villages and to the mud huts where dwell our poverty-stricken peasantry, and it is likely to become a hurricane if relief does not come to them soon. All our political problems and

discussions are but the background for *the* outstanding and overwhelming problem of India—the land problem.

The Congress has realised this in a large measure, and in spite of its political preoccupations it has laid down an agrarian programme. This programme, though it does not go to the root of the problem, is substantial and far-reaching and undoubtedly would bring relief to the peasantry. So far as I know, agrarian programmes drawn up by the peasant organisations do not differ greatly from this. But the drawing up of a theoretical programme is not enough. It must be given the fullest publicity among the peasant masses and the organisation must reach the village. Further we must draw up definite schemes and proposals on the basis of this programme. These proposals will vary in different parts of India as conditions differ. It is the business of provincial Congress committees and Congress assembly parties to draw up these proposals. It is true that we may not be in a position to give effect to this full programme under the present conditions. But we must be ready with it, to the smallest detail, so that when the time comes we can go ahead confidently and with speed.

I have pointed out that present conditions in India and the very dynamics of the situation are leading to the organisation of the peasantry. The example of other countries points to the same conclusion. Therefore it seems to me inevitable that peasant organisations will grow up. Where the Congress is itself largely a peasant organisation separate kisan sabhas and the like will not function effectively as organisations, though they may offer occasional platforms for the ventilation of kisan grievances. Where Congress contacts with village folk are weak, the kisan organisation will develop more. In any event, the growth of peasant organisations, weak or strong, will take place. What should be our attitude to them?

We cannot say that there should be no peasant organisations. That would be contrary to the declared Congress policy; it would be wrong in principle, and it would come into conflict with that living movement and ferment that we see all around us. Nor can we say that a kisan sabha should be just a wing of the Congress, each member of the sabha being also a primary member of the Congress. That would be an absurdity, for under those conditions it is hardly necessary to have a kisan sabha. It seems to me also out of the question to place peasant organisations in the same category as the All India Spinners Association or the Village Industries Association. Such restrictions will not stop the growth of separate peasant organisations; they will only result in putting them outside the pale of the Congress and make them look upon it as a partly hostile body.

It is important that there should be no thought of rivalry between the two for this will be injurious to both, more specially to the peasant organisation which is bound to be much weaker. If large numbers of peasants are direct members of the Congress and leading Congressmen are interested in the peasants' grievances, there will be no rivalry and in effect, though not organisationally, the peasant organisation will be a kind of a wing of the Congress.

There are of course difficulties in such vague contacts and possibilities of friction. These difficulties are inherent in the situation and we have to face them. The more real our politics are, the more they deal with the problems of life and the many facets of a vast and complex and dynamic movement, the more we have to face fresh problems and adjust ourselves to changing situations. For life itself is complex and ever-changing. Any advice I may give today on this or any other subject may not hold good some time later for conditions may change.

And then principles may be good but it is not always easy to apply them in practice. Thus we find today that sometimes the kisan sabha platform is used in opposition to the Congress. Sometimes political or communal reactionaries try to do so; more often, some Congressmen who do not approve of the local Congress committee or its office-bearers find the kisan sabha platform a convenient place from which to attack them. A rival Congress group thus may exploit another organisation to gain power in the Congress itself. Thus the kisan sabha sometimes becomes a temporary home for the recalcitrants of the Congress, or even those against whom disciplinary action has been taken by Congress committees. I have had reports of kisan conferences being organised within a couple of miles of a district political conference, on the same day and at the same time. This was intentionally done to injure the Congress conference and attract some people away from it. I have further had reports of processions organised to interfere with Congress conferences, of slogans offensive to the Congress being shouted there, of flag conflicts being deliberately engineered.

This kind of thing is highly objectionable and all Congressmen must oppose this folly and this exploitation of the kisan movement in the interests of particular groups and individuals. It does not injure the Congress ultimately, except in so far as it produces confusion in the minds of the unsophisticated and simple-minded peasantry. It injures far more those who indulge in such practices. I have previously written about the flag and I want to repeat that any attempt to dishonour the national flag, by whosoever committed, cannot be tolerated.[2] We have no grie-

2. See *post*, section 8, item 1.

vance against the red flag. For my part, I like it and honour it as the symbol of the workers' struggle and sacrifices. But it is grossly unfair to that flag to treat it as a kind of rival of the national flag.

Nor can we tolerate direct attacks on the Congress and offensive slogans. Persons who indulge in them do grave injury to the cause they claim to have at heart. This of course does not mean that criticism of Congress policy is not to take place. Full freedom of criticism is as the breath of life to living and growing organisations.

All such incidents have a local significance and are usually connected with local affairs. They should be dealt with locally or, if necessary, reference can be made to the A.I.C.C. office. When any Congressman indulges in persistent attacks on the Congress or in activity which is definitely harmful to Congress work and prestige, his case should be considered separately and referred to the P.C.C. or the A.I.C.C.

But we are concerned much more with the larger problem and we must not be led away from it by local peculiarities. To face and solve that problem we must develop direct contacts with the peasantry. I think also that we should develop and maintain friendly and cooperative relations with peasant organisations and Congressmen should belong to them in large numbers. But we must avoid the development of any sense of rivalry between the two. The principles we follow are clear enough but the human factor is equally important, and if the latter functions properly there should be a minimum of trouble and friction.

15. To Raj Kumar Chakravarty[1]

Allahabad
July 1, 1937

Dear Comrade,[2]
Your letter of the 29th June.[3]

It is always a little difficult to define precisely the scope of political or social intercourse. The real thing to appreciate is the intention of

1. A.I.C.C. File No. E-5/1936, pp. 97-99, N.M.M.L.
2. (1892-1975); a Congressman and professor in a college at Calcutta, member, Indian Constituent Assembly, 1946-47 and Pakistan Constituent Assembly, 1947-52; returned to India, 1953.
3. He had written that the resolution passed by the Working Committee in April 1937 urging Congressmen to avoid cooperation or contacts with the officials needed clarification. He specially asked whether the Congress legislators should not approach the ministers in charge of detenus for extending to them some temporary relief and added that it was not possible to completely avoid the officials at lower levels.

the resolution and this is clear enough. This resolution refers particularly to the provinces where minority ministries are in existence but the policy it lays down is not new. It is the old policy of the Congress to avoid cooperation or contacts as far as possible with officials of the government. This refers primarily to official and semi-official functions and such functions, even though they might be of a social character, which tend to enhance the prestige of the government and its officials. It does not bar all social dealings for many such are the result of domestic or other relations. This policy must be generally pursued by all Congressmen, whether they are M.L.As or not. Obviously we cannot be strict with the primary members of the Congress but in regard to prominent Congressmen we should be stricter.

In the provinces where there are minority ministries, special efforts were being made by ministers to develop contacts with Congress M.L.As. This had to be stopped as it might have led to complications and a lessening of our discipline. The same rule, generally speaking, applies to the provinces where the ministers have a majority. You will notice that such contacts with ministers are not absolutely banned—they are made subject to the express consent of the leader of the party. This policy applies to other Congressmen also but inevitably they stand on a somewhat different footing from the M.L.As who are brought in more or less official contact with ministers and officials.

Occasionally Congressmen, M.L.As and others have to deal with some government officials. This cannot and need not be stopped. Thus in local areas there may be a question of giving relief. But such contacts should not be encouraged and should usually take place after reference to higher authorities. In regard to the detenus question, if any contacts are necessary, the leader of the party should make them either with the ministers or others, or someone else with the permission of the leader.

Some contacts are also inevitable in municipalities and the like.

I think it will not be at all desirable for Congressmen to join any deputation to the ministers.

We do not want our rules and directions to be interpreted in a vindictive way and for disciplinary action to be taken at every fancied breach. We have laid down general principles only and we trust to the good sense of Congressmen to follow these principles. Where there is a clear and deliberate breach of the basic policy of the Congress or a specific direction, there disciplinary action might be taken.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

16. Importance of Non-legislative Work[1]

Allahabad
July 10, 1937

Dear Comrade,

I need not draw your attention to the resolution of the Working Committee on office acceptance for that has already received sufficient attention from you. But I would draw your attention again to the directions of the Working Committee, given in its earlier resolutions and endorsed by the A.I.C.C. to the vital importance of continuing with full vigour our organisational and other work outside the legislatures. That must continue to be our major occupation and without it legislative activity would have little value. The two forms of activity must be coordinated together and the masses must be kept in touch with what we do and consulted about it. The initiative should come from those masses.

The work of enrolling Congress members must continue vigorously as well as the formation of village committees. These committees should be encouraged to meet frequently to consider and discuss their own problems as well as the larger issues before the country. Our work in the legislatures will only bear fruit if it is followed closely and influenced by the Congress rank and file and the people generally. It must be the reflex of our larger freedom movement.

I should like to know what steps you are taking, in terms of the Working Committee's directions, to coordinate the activities of your provincial Congress committee with those of the Congress Party in the provincial assembly. In provinces where the area under the jurisdiction of both is more or less the same, few difficulties will arise. But there are composite provinces where the legislative province includes several Congress provinces. In such composite provinces care should be taken to work harmoniously and without encroaching on each other's preserves. The provincial Congress committee is the final authority for Congress purposes within that province. At the same time the Congress members of the legislature from that province belong to the Congress Party of the assembly and owe discipline to that party. To avoid misunderstandings a practice should be built up of mutual consultations. For this purpose the parliamentary sub-committee of the Working Committee should be consulted.

During the ensuing months we want to keep in close touch with your provincial activities and we expect you to keep in direct and constant touch with your district and local activities. For this purpose a system

1. Circular to P.C.Cs. A.I.C.C. File No. 41/1936-37, p. 41, N.M.M.L.

of fortnightly reports must be kept up. We shall therefore expect to hear from you every fortnight giving a brief and concise account of the Congress work that is being done, the number of Congress workers enrolled, the number of village and ward committees functioning, and other activities of the Congress.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

17. The Congress and Peasant Organisations[1]

Allahabad
July 10, 1937

Dear Comrade,
Some days ago I sent an article to the press in which I discussed our relation to labour and peasant organisations.[2] This was reproduced in many newspapers and I presume that your attention was drawn to it. In this article I discussed the principles that should govern our work and I pointed out various difficulties that had to be faced. I did not go into the details of how to surmount these difficulties as conditions differ in various parts of the country and I could only deal with the general problem in that article.

Friends have written to me pointing out again some of their difficulties. I shall be glad to consider these fully and offer such advice as I can. A vital and growing movement like ours which touches the masses intimately must inevitably come up against such difficult problems. In considering them, however, the basic principles must be kept in view and this is why I drew attention to them.

I find that these problems and difficulties are more marked in areas where the Congress contacts with the rural masses are less than they should be. With the growth of Congress committees in villages and a large and fairly active rural membership, the desire of these rural masses for opportunities of self-expression is largely filled.

Obviously the first duty of every Congressman is to develop these direct contacts with the villages. That is the whole purpose of our mass contacts drive. We must make more and more members of the Congress in our rural areas and build up a network of village committees. The Congress agrarian programme must be placed before them for this is of greater interest to them than other issues. Their own immediate problems must be tackled and discussed with them and every possible

1. Circular to P.C.Cs. A.I.C.C. File No. 41/1936-37, pp. 43-44, N.M.M.L.
2. See *ante*, item 14.

help given in removing their grievances and teaching them to act in an organised and effective way.

Where genuine peasant organisations exist we should cooperate with them. We cannot oppose the formation of such organisations for it is the undoubted right of the peasants to organise for the removal of such grievances.

Where such organisations are politically reactionary they are not true peasant organisations and we cannot cooperate. Also where the peasant platform is utilised as a platform by opponents of the Congress, we cannot have anything to do with it.

But while we cooperate with peasant organisations, our primary duty is to make the Congress in the rural areas as nearly a kisan organisation as is possible. Unless we do this in an ever-growing measure we shall lose living touch with the peasantry. Every Congressman must therefore bear this in mind and work accordingly.

I have previously discussed the question of the flag. For the Congress and for every Congress function, the only possible flag is the national flag. Indeed this flag has already become the flag of the nation. Great as the Congress is, the flag is something more than the Congress flag.

The red flag has long been associated with the workers, especially industrial workers. It is not the flag of any particular country. Its origin is curious. In the early stages of the workers' movement, about a hundred years ago, the red flag was used by the state authorities when martial law was proclaimed and the workers were shot down and crushed under it. Thus it became associated in the mind of the workers with suffering and sacrifice for the cause; it came to embody for them their hopes and aspirations. They adopted this flag of their opponents and made it the symbol of their own solidarity. It became all over the world the international flag of the working class. As such it is right that we honour it. And if our workers adopt it as their trade union flag, it is right that they should do so in token of their solidarity with the workers of the world.

But to bring the red flag in token of hostility or rivalry to the national flag is highly objectionable and leads inevitably to friction. Therefore all such displays of it must be avoided. More specially this is to be borne in mind in rural areas. The peasant has no such background in regard to the red flag as the industrial worker has. We have slowly accustomed him to the national flag and he has grown to cherish it and consider it as his own. This flag represents, as no other does, the national struggle for independence. To lessen its value in the peasant mind, to confuse him in regard to flags, is to do disservice to our freedom movement. Therefore the peasantry should be encouraged to use the national

flag only and I would suggest to peasant organisations also to use this flag. Let us make it the universal symbol of Indian independence, of political and social freedom for our Indian masses.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

18. To President, Bengal P.C.C.[1]

Allahabad
July 21, 1937

Dear Comrade,

I have been sent a copy of the proceedings of the meeting of the Congress council party held on the 14th July. From this it appears that six persons, of whom five are Rai Bahadurs, wrote letters offering their cooperation to the Congress council party and this was accepted with thanks. It was resolved further that they may be invited to attend the meetings of the party in future. It appears further that some of these gentlemen have been made members of the sub-committees formed by the Congress Party.

It will appear that these gentlemen, for all practical purposes, are being treated as members of the party without their having given any pledge. This seems to me contrary to the Congress direction in the matter and I should like to have fuller information from you. The fact that there are only a few members of the Congress Party does not mean that other people should be added on who have nothing to do with the Congress. May I also suggest that gentlemen who rejoice in the titles of Rai Bahadur and the like should ordinarily be kept at a safe distance from the Congress Party? I shall thank you if you will send me an early reply.[2]

Regarding the question of attendance in the council when the Governor gives his address in the joint sitting, it is obvious that the council party must follow without exception the policy to be laid down by the assembly party. It would be absurd for one group to keep away from this function and for the other to attend it.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. E-5/1936, p. 57, N.M.M.L.
2. The Bengal P.C.C. replied that, in a resolution passed on 21 July, they had directed the council party not to enter into any coalition with non-Congressmen who had not signed the Congress pledge or given up their titles, and were not aware of the decisions taken by it.

19. To Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade[1]

Allahabad
July 23, 1937

My dear Tai,

Your circular letter about the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship has reached me. It is not very safe for you to incite me to express my opinions on such subjects. I find that when I do express them they shock and irritate people. Of course, it does one good to be shocked occasionally and therefore it is perhaps worthwhile for me to indulge in this pastime.

I am afraid however that I cannot find time to deal with the subject satisfactorily, much as I would like to do so. So far as the women suffrage movement is concerned in its narrow aspect there is not much doing in India. Women have got the suffrage though in a limited way and they are bound to get it extended. But the growing feminist movement in India which deals with other problems also is, of course, an important later-day development. Politically speaking, you are no doubt aware that the Congress stands whole-heartedly for equal citizenship of women with men and for the same franchise for both. So far as I am concerned I think that women should be treated on the same level as men educationally and economically and industrially, except in so far as a few occupations are concerned.

All good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-71/1937, p. 1, N.M.M.L.

20. To Congress Leaders of the Minority Provinces[1]

Allahabad
July 30, 1937

Dear Comrade,

I have to remind you that in accordance with the direction of the Faizpur Congress it is the duty of the Congress parties in the provincial

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-72/1937, p. 33, N.M.M.L.

legislatures to bring forward at the earliest opportunity the demand for the summoning of a constituent assembly elected by adult suffrage. The Working Committee subsequently emphasized this and later the All India Convention which met at Delhi on March 19th and 20th called upon all Congress parties to take the earliest opportunity to put forward, in the name of the nation, a demand in their respective legislatures that the Government of India Act of 1935 be withdrawn so that the people of India may frame their own constitution.

I should be glad to know what you have done so far to give effect to this Congress direction and what you propose to do in the future. This matter relates to the basic policy of the Congress itself, and the essence of the direction is that steps be taken at the earliest opportunity. The direction applies as much to the provinces where Congress parties are in minority, as in those where they are in majority.

The matter will be considered soon by the Working Committee and I shall therefore like to have your reply at an early date.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

21. The Policy of the Congress[1]

Question: Would you kindly tell us why the ban on labour leaders is not removed?

Jawaharlal Nehru: The ministers have several difficulties in their way and it may take some time before any action is taken. I have no knowledge about the matter, but I feel that it may be necessary for the Congress ministry to go through a long process before they acted.

Q: Could you kindly tell us about the different phases of the Congress work?

JN: At the outset I want to impress upon you the necessity for keeping such discussions open, so that the public might know what we are

1. At a meeting of Congress workers in Bombay on 11 August 1937, Jawaharlal had answered the questions put to him by some Congressmen. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 12 August 1937.

all about. I, for one, am against any secret confabulations behind closed doors, and that is why I asked the press to be present on this occasion. There may be occasions when it may not be advisable to hold open discussions.

In today's issue of *The Bombay Sentinel* there is a headline which says that the Mahatma and I are to meet the Viceroy. Something was published yesterday also as to what had transpired between Mahatma Gandhi and the Viceroy during their last interview.[2] It was stated that the discussions centred round federation. I am amazed at the way in which things have been published. I want to assure you that there is not an iota of truth in what has been stated. I do not know from where the paper got such information. I think there should be some responsibility in publishing things. When federation was not even thought of, it is simply amazing to say that federation was discussed. When such reports are published, it becomes difficult to carry on. There are instances when things that are published by the papers have just an iota of truth. Such publications create enormous difficulties in the work that has to be carried on in the country's fight for freedom. Already difficulties have been created by the acceptance of office, and with the spread of such baseless stories, the difficulties increase. I have no objection whatever to the criticism of the ministries. In a democracy it is the inherent right of everyone to criticise. But I would ask the people not to forget our main objective.

> Q: What is your view about the agitation going on in Bombay regarding the election of the leader of the legislative party?

JN: *The Bombay Sentinel* and other papers have been publishing letters, several of them open letters to me and the Mahatma. I have been trying to understand what all this agitation is about. What is the question that has to be solved? The way the agitation has been started and carried on is reprehensible. One cannot understand the purpose of the agitation of the kind. There is a gentlemanly way of doing things. Have the newspapermen in the city forgotten the way in which they have to conduct newspapers? This is the first time in my life that I have come across such an irresponsible way of doing things.

The Indian National Congress is a very big political organisation. There is a method of doing and discussing things. If it is done in the wrong way, much harm would be done to the Congress. I want to assure you that I personally place the honour and prestige of the Congress foremost. I love the institution and would resist with my life

2. See p. 291.

any harm done to that institution. I might commit mistakes. But I believe in doing things in a democratic manner. Whatever has happened so far, has happened with the consent of the people who are the strength of the Congress. For example, the idea of mass contact has been started with a view to see that primary members of the Congress take initiative in the Congress work.

Q: How long do you expect the Congress ministries to be in office?

JN: It would depend on the circumstances. One cannot say now how long the Congress ministries will continue in office. The present turn is a political game, each party trying to gain its point. The British Government wants to divide Indians, while the Congress has accepted office to strengthen the masses and the Congress organization. Each side will choose its own time and place to give fight to the other, and not play into the other's hands. If Congressmen and the people try to force the hands of the ministers, who are tied hand and foot and have their own difficulties to face, the position of the ministers would be weakened, and hence attacks on them would be improper. I have however no objection to constructive criticism.

The next fight is going to be a very big one, and the people should prepare themselves for it. One should not deceive oneself by imagining that the acceptance of office by Congressmen has led to Swaraj or Congress raj. The invitation of the British statesmen to the Congress to accept office was with the definite view of dividing the Congress. Once that division is there, inauguration of federation would not be difficult.

Q: What do you think of the Government of India Act?

JN: Every Indian should resist, tear, and burn the federal part of the Government of India Act. I cannot understand how people could ever imagine that Gandhiji could have discussed with the Viceroy on the basis of the present scheme of federation. I consider any Indian going to the Viceroy to discuss the federal scheme of the Government of India Act and its introduction in India as a traitor to the country. *The Times of India* has said that, according to the law, Congressmen cannot prevent the inauguration of federation.[3] That is for the Congress to find

3. In its issue of 11 August 1937, the paper stated "a closer study of the provisions of the Act revealed that it was not within the competence of the British Indian provinces to say whether or not they would join the federation ...however much the governments—six of them at least—may desire to be obstructive."

out and no doubt that will be done. But apart from that I cannot imagine how the constitution can remain intact when, against the desire of the Congress governments, the Governors seek to send representatives to the federal assembly. That would certainly involve a conflict with the Congress.

22. To Ali Sardar Jafri[1]

Allahabad
September 1, 1937

Dear Sir,[2]
I have your letter without date. I have not followed very closely the controversy in *The Statesman* about *Bande Mataram*.[3]

The Congress has not officially adopted any song as a kind of national anthem. In practice however the *Bande Mataram* is often used in national gatherings together with other songs. The reason for this is that 30 years ago this song and this cry became a criminal offence and it developed into a challenge to British imperialism.[4] Thousands of people suffered because of this and it came to be associated in the minds of the public with a fight against British imperialism. To this extent it became a symbol of nationalism in India. I do not think anybody considers the words to have anything to do with a goddess. That interpretation is absurd. Nor are we concerned with the idea that the author of the book, which contains this song, had in his mind when he wrote it, because the public does not think on these lines.

I think that the whole song and all the words in it are thoroughly harmless and nobody can take exception to their meaning. But I also think that the song is not suitable as a national anthem. It contains too many difficult words which people do not understand and the ideas it contains are also out of keeping with modern notions of nationalism

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(2)/1937, pp. 215-216, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1913); Urdu poet and writer; edited *Diwan-e-Ghalib* and *Diwan-e-Mir* in Hindi and Urdu.
3. In *The Statesman* of 14 August 1937, it was contended that the Muslims objected to the singing of *Bande Mataram* because in *Ananda Math*, this song was sung by the main character of the play whose "sole aim was to turn out the Moslems from Bengal", and that the song was also idolatrous in spirit.
4. At the Bengal provincial conference held in Barisal in 1906, the delegates were severely beaten for singing this song in defiance of the ban.

and progress. We should certainly try to have more suitable national songs in simple language. But great songs and anthems cannot be made to order. It requires a genius for the purpose. I suppose in time we shall get something good. Meanwhile there is no reason why we should not give full permission for the use of the *Bande Mataram* as well as other favoured songs which many people have come to associate with our struggle for freedom.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

23. To Sangat Singh[1]

Allahabad
September 6, 1937

Dear Comrade,[2]
The Congress attitude in regard to any issue is contained in the Congress resolutions. These resolutions, and these include the resolutions of the P.C.C., have laid down the agrarian programme. Every Congressman can advocate this programme as the official Congress programme. In regard to matters like the abolition of the zamindari system there is no official decision of the Congress. But our own P.C.C. is favourably inclined towards this. It is therefore possible for Congressmen to hold either viewpoint and to express it in public. They can support the abolition of the zamindari system or its continuance. In doing so they do not commit the Congress to it.

Even in advocating the abolition of the zamindari system it should be borne in mind that we deal with a principle and are not in opposition to individuals who may be big zamindars. It is desirable to lay stress on the official Congress programme in a joint meeting so as to avoid needless controversy over other matters before the public. However, a Congressman is perfectly entitled to advocate the cause of the kisans from the Congress platform. It is undesirable for him at any time to attack individuals, even though there might be big landlords or *sahukars*. He can of course criticise the whole *sahukari* system.

A Congressman can certainly be a member of a kisan sangh provided this kisan sangh does not act against the interests of the Congress.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-76/1937, p. 359, N.M.M.L.
2. A Congressman of Saharanpur.

A Congressman has every right to popularise his viewpoint.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

24. On the Role of the Congress Socialist Party[1]

I am not inclined to enter into controversy with regard to crystallization of groups or parties within the Indian National Congress with a view to its radicalisation. However, it is clear to me that individuals or groups have perfect right and liberty to propagate their ideas within the Congress.

The desirability or otherwise of such groups depends on their working and their approach to problems as they arise from time to time. The Congress is a national organisation and has in its fold people of varying or conflicting opinions. As a living body it evolved an economic and social policy of its own and there might be conflicting or divergent views with regard to such policies in the Indian National Congress. The Congress Socialist Party has focused attention on these policies and propagated an ideology, which, according to me, is no doubt a good thing. The Congress Socialist Party also, it must be admitted, has helped in the process of radicalisation of the Congress. However, I have found occasions when, owing to a wrong approach, the otherwise sympathetic elements, instead of being drawn to socialism, were repulsed from it. As far as I can see, there is no hostility to the Congress Socialist Party. As such, the unnecessary and obtrusive militancy creates harmful reactions.

There is a fear of the labour policy, contained in the radical programme, creating class conflict. Obviously, in certain Congress circles such fears are entertained with the inevitable result of weakening the tempo of implementing the radical programme, but it is the duty of the people holding views in favour of such an ideology to dispel such fears as they are more imaginary than real, and arise partly due to the lack of appreciation of the historical implications of the ever-growing class conflict in the present capitalist structure of society. There is neither a

1. Talk to the members of the Gujarat Congress Socialist Party, Ahmedabad, 16 September 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 23 October 1937.

personal nor a private motive involved in the struggle, but it is an element woven in the very fabric of society as constituted at present. We cannot stop people holding or propagating the opposite views. The problem can be dealt with properly and tactfully by ceaseless impersonal propaganda and by explaining the intricacies of the historical process.

The workers in the labour field must concentrate on the organisation of labour on genuine trade union lines. The so-called militancy, which is not required at all, always works towards quite a different end than that contemplated by the militant forces which organise strikes, etc.

In those provinces where the Congress has come to power, the people and Congress workers can mobilise mass opinion by demonstrations which are likely to assist the respective ministries. The creation of mass strength is the strongest safeguard against the inauguration of federation.

25. Gandhi Jayanti[1]

Soon we shall be celebrating Gandhi Jayanti week and paying our homage to Mahatmaji. It is right and fitting that we honour our great leader—Mahatma Gandhi—in this and other ways for no man in India has done more for the freedom of our people. India of today is largely of his making and though independence may still be far from us, we have marched a long way on that journey.

Much remains yet to be done and we shall have to face many struggles and crises before we reach the promised land. Let us bear this in mind and not be carried away by momentary excitement, by pride, by partial achievement, or by arrogance of holding some limited power. We have reason to be proud of our great organization and of the peaceful discipline that it has evolved in millions of our people.

We think with joy and gratitude of the sacrifice of so many of our comrades who have lighted the path of Swaraj. By the labour and sacrifice of innumerable comrades of ours, we have built an India strong of purpose and strong in action. We have laid a firm foundation of the noble structure to be.

1. Statement to the press, Lucknow, 23 September 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 24 September 1937.

Our strength comes from organization and discipline and the right purpose and right means. That is the strength which is neither swollen by momentary triumph nor depressed by temporary failure. Only the weak and the infirm of purpose allow themselves to be inflated and deflated in this way. A great purpose requires iron determination and iron discipline which is superior to excitement of passing phases. The right purpose requires the right means to attain it for we are judged by means we adopt and not merely by the end that we loudly proclaim.

That end in itself is governed by the path we follow. It is well to remember this, or else we shall go astray and weaken and fail to take advantage of the great opportunities that fate and circumstances will place in our way. We are out for great things; to make history of our choice, to mould India of our dream. And so in paying homage to our great leader and in sending him our greetings we must think anew of tasks ahead and prepare for them. We have to remember lessons he taught us of peaceful disciplined action and not allow ourselves to be deflected from it. We have to remember also that khadi has become the symbol of our struggle for freedom and the very livery of it. Let us all wear this livery of national service and thus proclaim our adherence to the great cause we have at heart.

26. To S.V. Ramaswamy[1]

Camp Lucknow
October 2, 1937

Dear Sir,[2]
Owing to my absence on tour I have only now seen your letter of the 4th September together with its enclosures. I have carefully seen all the papers that you have sent. You have preferred an appeal from the decision of the executive of the Tamil Nad Congress Committee. I might remind you that ordinarily disciplinary action is taken by the provincial committees and such matters do not come up in appeal to the Working Committee. A certain revisional jurisdiction, however, always vests in the Working Committee and it is for it to consider any such case under that jurisdiction.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-19(ii)/1937, pp. 59-63, N.M.M.L.
2. (1906-1966); a Congressman of Salem; member, Lok Sabha, 1952-58; Deputy Minister of Railways, Government of India, 1958-64 and Deputy Minister of Commerce, 1964-66.

You have complained in your letter that no charges were framed against you and no time was given to you to meet them. As a matter of fact, I find from the papers you have sent me that you were given an opportunity to send an explanation by both the president of the Salem District Congress Committee and the president of the Tamil Nad P.C.C. You have been further informed that the charge against you was that you had committed an offence against Congress principles and solidarity and had maliciously attacked the leader of the Congress Party in your article in the *Viduthalai* of 19th July 1937. In fact you sent a lengthy explanation in justification of the article in question to both the Salem District Congress Commitee and the Tamil Nad Congress Committee. I fail to understand how you can maintain, in view of this, that no charge was framed and no opportunity was given to you for an explanation. The facts are not disputed, as the offence alleged against you was an article which you admitted. In your explanation you tried to justify this article at length. Under the circumstances, there was no point in your arguing the matter orally with the Tamil Nad P.C.C. or its executive. It seems to me clear, therefore, that full opportunity has been given to you, under the rules, to submit your explanation. And in fact you did so.

On the merits of this question I should like to say that the article you wrote is one of the most extraordinary that I have ever read in connection with the Congress. I have often stated that we welcome criticism from Congressmen and I have no desire to suppress this. But the spirit and the language of your article have little to do with criticism. It is sheer vituperation of the most personal kind. An intense communalism and an anti-Brahmin feeling run through this article and I think any person will agree with me that your article will produce in the mind of a reader a strong feeling against the Congress organisation in Madras. Your article therefore lowers the dignity of the Congress and injures it in the minds of many persons.

I do not wish to discuss in this letter your article in detail. But I like to point out that your criticism[3] of the nomination of Dr. Rajan[4]

3. He had observed: "The nomination of Dr. T.S.S. Rajan, a gentleman belonging to the same sub-sect as the leader, for the special purpose of making him the leader of the upper house and a minister is a bad precedent....Dr. Rajan is a person against whom disciplinary action has been taken. If this disobedience and disloyalty are so lightly to be treated with what grace could the leader enforce discipline against other members?"

4. T.S.S. Rajan (1880-1953); a physician of Tiruchchirappalli; imprisoned during noncooperation movement; Minister for Public Health and Religious Endowments, Madras Government, 1937-39 and 1946-51.

is entirely misconceived. That nomination may have been good or bad but it was perfectly correct and there was no breach of any rule in the disciplinary action that the Congress committee took against Dr. Rajan. No bar was placed against him and he submitted to the action that was taken against him.

You have stated in your article that Brahminism is a menace far more undesirable than foreign rule. This sentiment is the height of communalism and anti-nationalism. You refer repeatedly to the larger interests of the non-Brahmins. You may be right in criticising the domination of the Brahmin element in the south but the whole trend of your article is so intensely communal that I was astonished that a Congressman should write this. If there was a general response to your call, it can only mean the disintegration of the Congress in the south and the increase of communal friction. I repeat that this article of yours which calls upon the people to drive out every Brahmin from any post in the Congress organisation, even that of a clerk, and which demands a purging of the Brahmin plague, is so offensive that I cannot conceive that any person of sobriety has written it. I can only imagine that you did so in a moment of extreme excitement when you were not wholly responsible for your action. But I find that in your subsequent correspondence and explanation you have sought to justify this article completely. There is not a shadow of regret anywhere or a withdrawal of the vulgar abuse that it contains. Even apart from the Congress rules and principles, I should have thought that decency would object to such an article.

Under the circumstances, I really do not see how the Congress committee could have refrained from taking disciplinary action against you. Whether this action was in excess of the requirement or not is another matter. But it is difficult to consider that even so long as you persist in your attitude of justification of something which is on the face of it unjustifiable.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

27. To S.C. Mitra[1]

Allahabad
October 6, 1937

Dear Sir,
Newspaper reports state that you have decided to sever your connection from the B.P.C.C. as you wish to be a no-party man. It is not quite clear what you mean by this phrase or how you propose to act in the future. But you will no doubt remember that you have been elected[2] on the Congress ticket and pledge and you cannot ignore this pledge even as President of the council. This matter therefore raises important issues which will have to be considered not only by the B.P.C.C. but by the All India Working Committee at its next meeting. I should like, therefore, to have all the facts from you. No one of course suggests that as President of the council you should show partiality to the Congress. You have to be impartial in your duties. But we do not accept the position that a Congressman ceases to be a Congressman if he happens to be a Speaker or President. The Congress is not a party. It is something much bigger than that, although it might function as a party in an assembly. If you disagree with the viewpoint of the Congress in this or other matters, then the right course for you is to resign and leave the Congress to run another candidate.

I should like to know what salary you have been receiving since your appointment.[3] The Congress has fixed the salary of Rs. 500/- as the maximum for Speakers and Presidents plus a maximum allowance of Rs. 250/-. No Congressman can accept anything more than this and the balance is to be handed over to the Congress funds. Please let me know what salary you have been receiving so far and what part of it you have handed over to the Congress funds.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-5/1937, p. 53, N.M.M.L.
2. Denying this he wrote to Jawaharlal on 22 October 1937 that the Congress Party in the council being in a small minority had not set up any candidate for the presidentship and that 70 p.c. of his votes came from non-Congress members. He had therefore resigned from the council of the B.P.C.C. He had also felt that as President of the Bengal Council he should not take active part in politics.
3. He wrote that out of his salary of Rs. 1,500/-, he had decided to draw Rs. 500/- only in addition to car and house allowances.

Till these matters are settled it will not be possible for the B.P.C.C. to accept your resignation.[4]

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. His resignation which was accepted in April 1937 by the Congress council party had already been ratified by the Bengal P.C.C. in September 1937.

28. On His Tour of Gujarat[1]

I am sorry I am unable to visit Haripura on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of Congressnagar.[2] I should have liked to have gone there in any event, but my desire to go has increased after the five days that I spent recently in Gujarat.[3] These five days were crowded days and the rich panorama of Gujarat and its attractive sons and daughters passed before my eyes. Everywhere I went it was inspiring to see the great enthusiasm of the people for the Congress and for Indian freedom. Even in the remotest village of Gujarat the cry of *Inquilab Zindabad* came from lusty throats. Gujarat has a proud reputation for national service and for the part it has taken in our freedom struggle. The mighty demonstrations that I saw everywhere that I went in Gujarat and the great enthusiasm that filled all kinds and classes of people were evidence, if evidence was needed, that Gujarat, as ever, is ready for sacrifice and struggle in the cause of Indian freedom. I have brought back pleasant memories from my brief tour, memories which will endure; and because of these memories I wanted to go back to renew them soon. But other and urgent calls have come for me and my next visit to Gujarat must wait. May I express my deep gratitude to all our friends and comrades in Gujarat for their exceeding kindness to me during this visit of mine and for the great trouble they took over it?

1. Message sent to the Gujarat P.C.C., Allahabad, 7 October 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 8 October 1937.
2. The foundation stone was to be laid on 14 October 1937 preparatory to the holding of the annual session of the Congress from 18 to 20 February 1938.
3. Jawaharlal visited Gujarat from 16 to 20 September 1937.

29. To Satyapal[1]

Allahabad
October 19, 1937

My dear Dr. Satyapal,

Your letter[2] was given to me. I am sorry I missed seeing you on my way back. I had many things to speak to you about and I had no time for doing so during my brief stay.

I do not know what Dr. Gopichand and his party are saying. It is difficult to deal with vague allegations. Whatever I said in the Punjab I said publicly, or semi-publicly at the workers' meeting. It is absurd to say that I admonished anybody, least of all you. But I am free to confess that I am disheartened at the way the Congress work is carried on in the Punjab. The personal element counts far more there than other matters. It has been my endeavour to reduce this personal element in Congress affairs everywhere. I have therefore attempted to lessen the significance of the office of president or secretary of Congress committeess from the A.I.C.C. downwards. It is the committees that should count and not individuals. When this is done more democracy comes in and the interest in the office-bearers lessens. Conflicts of opinions and personalities are inevitable in public work. But one tries to avoid such conflicts from influencing our work. Otherwise all of us suffer. In the Punjab, more than anywhere else, great difficulties have to be countered. These difficulties will increase to some extent because of the decisions of the Muslim League conference.[3] We cannot afford to weaken our forces at this juncture by raising minor issues which divert attention.

I wanted to talk to you about certain circulars issued by your office which seemed to me unhappy. I also wanted to tell you that during my journey to Peshawar and back various people met me. They complained about the extravagance of the P.C.C. workers who had been sent to tour. Also about their accounts. It appears that groups of workers are sent out and sometimes their expenses are heavy. This kind of complaint is often exaggerated but it cannot be ignored and should be inquired into.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-17/1937, pp. 117-119, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter of 16 October 1937, he had stated that Gopichand Bhargava and his followers had been spreading the false news that Jawaharlal had severely reprimanded him for not being able to conduct Congress work properly in the Punjab.
3. See pp. 185-186.

I was sorry to read in the papers your latest statement[4] regarding the unity conference. After all that had happened during the provincial conference there seemed to be no necessity for such a statement at this stage. I am quite clear in my own mind that we must withdraw from this conference. But I want to proceed about it in the right way. The recent proceedings of the Muslim League have confirmed me in my opinion.

You are aware that when purses are presented in a province a percentage of these collections goes to the A.I.C.C. As the Punjab is not flourishing financially, we shall charge only a quota of 10% which we did on the last occasion also. Will you therefore kindly send us 10% of the general collections made during my last tour?

Please send us a brief account of the collections.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. In a statement issued on 16 October 1937, Satyapal said that "the unity conference could produce no results except to multiply communal differences and should be opposed tooth and nail".

30. To Satyapal[1]

Allahabad
November 9, 1937

My dear Dr. Satyapal,
I have read your statement[2] issued to the press in regard to the Working Committee's resolution on the unity conference. I do not think this

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-17/1937, pp. 53-54, N.M.M.L.
2. Commenting on the Congress Working Committee's directive to its representatives to proceed with the deliberations in the unity conference, Satyapal stated on 3 November 1937 that since Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai Patel had declared the futility of cooperating with the unity conference, the decision of the Working Committee had come to him as a painful surprise.

statement was at all a happy one. It was open to you to take any individual action you liked in the matter but as the president of the Punjab P.C.C. a statement of this kind issued by you can only lead to further complications. You refer to your painful surprise because I had clearly declared the futility of our cooperating with the conference. But you forgot that as President of the Congress I act impersonally and represent the decisions of the Working Committee in their corporate capacity. I wish our friends in the Punjab could also act impersonally and think in terms of the organisation more than on individual or personal terms.

The Working Committee has to take into consideration all-India factors. It has to take a distant view as well as a near view. Many of these factors are perhaps not considered by you and hence there is a difference in the conclusion arrived at. A serious situation is arising all over India today owing to the deliberate activities of certain communalists who are trying their utmost to increase communal friction. The very fact that they are losing ground all along the line makes them speak and act most irresponsibly. We have to take all these matters into consideration and always keep our larger policy before us. In any event, each one of us who belongs to the organisation has to subordinate his personal inclinations to the common will. Whatever we may think, it is unbecoming for us to argue with each other in public prints.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

31. Allowances for Congress Members of Assemblies in Non-Congress Provinces[1]

The Working Committee clearly laid down some time back the rules governing members' allowances both in the Congress provinces and in the non-Congress provinces.[2] In the Congress provinces effect could be

1. Circular to the leaders of the Congress Party in the non-Congress provinces sent on 30 November 1937. A.I.C.C. File No. G-28/1937, p. 163, N.M.M.L
2. See p. 284.

given to this by law. In the non-Congress provinces this was not so and a much higher rate, and sometimes a shamefully exorbitant rate, of payment was adopted in spite of objections raised by the Congress members. It is clear that the Congress members in these non-Congress provinces cannot accept anything more than what the Congress members in the Congress provinces are getting. This is not only against the expressed provisions of the Working Committee resolution but is derogatory to their dignity and prestige. If they accept anything more, they will lose a great deal of their credit with the public and will become the butts of our opponents' ridicule. Because of this the Working Committee made it clear that all excess payment should be handed over to the A.I.C.C. to be earmarked for the province concerned. This money was to be used for provincial purposes on the advice of the provincial Congress committee and the Congress legislature party in the assembly in that province. This fund primarily was not to be used for the day to day activities of the Congress but was to be used partly as an election fund and partly for special Congress activities like the building up of a national service, but in special cases it might be used for other Congress activities also. It must be remembered, however, that it is slightly improper for Congress committees to function and to rely on such funds for their routine activities. In a very special case the fund might be used for the repayment of debts incurred for election purposes by the provincial organisation or even by some individuals. But this must be treated as a special case to be decided upon by the P.C.C. and the Congress Party. Individual members should not decide this nor should they pay any part of the money to their district committees directly. It is important that funds should be paid directly to the A.I.C.C. through the leader of the party. There has been a great delay in conforming to this rule, although considerable sums have been realised by individual members. This is a breach of that rule and is very unfair to the Congress members in the Congress provinces. It should be remembered that in these Congress provinces, members are not only getting much less as a daily allowance but also lower railway fares. In addition to this, they give a percentage of this allowance to the P.C.C. and another percentage to the Congress Party. In the U.P., out of the lesser allowance that they get, members pay 15% to the P.C.C. for a national service fund. They pay another percentage, which I do not remember, to the Congress Party in the assembly. Apart from this, each member was called upon to pay Rs. 50/- in order to enable the P.C.C. to pay off its election debts. This Rs. 50/- is likely to be increased to Rs. 100/- in the case of many members and some have indeed paid much more for the provincial debts. Thus it will be seen

that it will be grossly unfair for Congress members in non-Congress provinces to profit personally by these allowances. We cannot treat these allowances as profit-making concerns. Leaders of the Congress Party in these provinces are therefore requested to take immediate steps in this matter and to report to the A.I.C.C. office the names of the members who have paid, and the names of those who have not paid, in accordance with the resolution of the Working Committee. It should be remembered that this resolution applies also to Congress members who have become presidents of the assembly or the council in non-Congress provinces.

32. To Bhaskar Mitter[1]

Allahabad
December 23, 1937

Dear Bhaskar Mitter,[2]
I have your letter of the 27th November. I agree with you that political activities in Bengal have suffered a great deal owing to various causes. It is a pity as there is such a good material there. I hope there will be an improvement now that Subhas Babu will be there.

As for a new newspaper in Calcutta, it is perfectly true that there is no real Congress organ, although there are several nationalist newspapers. As a matter of fact there is no such newspaper in India. Calcutta at least has some papers which give the nationalist side. In the U.P. there is not a single newspaper which does even that. There is a probability that we may start a daily in English soon at Lucknow, to be followed by Urdu and Hindi papers. I do not know when this will fructify. At the present moment we cannot do without English newspapers, though the importance of Indian language papers is growing and they are likely to dominate the future. In Bengal you would have considerable competition whether you started in English or Bengali. As a matter of fact if you have a proper press, it is not difficult to have

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1919); at present chairman, Andrew Yule & Co. Ltd., Calcutta; as a student at Cambridge, he wanted Jawaharlal to advise him whether he could start a newspaper in Bengali on his return home so that the real economic character of the people's problems could be explained to them.

two papers in different languages. In this matter as in others you might consult Subhas Bose who might be going to England soon.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

33. On the Training of Volunteers[1]

I have long thought it necessary that we should encourage volunteering among our people. This volunteering can have nothing to do with a training in armed warfare. But nevertheless volunteering is necessary to inculcate discipline and the capacity for united action, also to improve the physique and bearing of our young men and women. I do not like to see Indian boys and girls going about with bent backs and generally slouching along. I want them straight of limb and strong of body. The physical bearing of an individual is not only intimately connected with his efficiency as a worker but has also psychological reactions on his mental approach to any problem.

But most of all we require volunteering because any great organisation like ours cannot do without it. Even in the small matter of controlling meetings, processions and other activities of the Congress, disciplined volunteers are essential. We are apt to think that a large number of volunteers, even though inefficiently trained, are better than a smaller number better trained. It is obvious that this is not so, and it is frequently seen that crowds of volunteers come in the way of efficient management. I think much has still to be learnt by our volunteers as to how to deal with crowds. The first thing they must remember is that they have to deal with the crowds in a friendly and persuasive manner and not in the hostile manner of the police. A great crowd does not permit itself to be bullied. But a friendly crowd is always prepared to listen to reason if approached in the right manner. Therefore, at every function an attempt should be made to give the fullest directions to the crowd and to appeal for their cooperation.

1. Message sent on 24 December 1937 for a booklet on the volunteer organisation written by Harivadan Thakore on the occasion of the Haripura Congress. A.I.C.C. File No. G-89/1937-38, pp. 229-231, N.M.M.L.

Volunteers must remember that two things are forbidden as far as they are concerned. They must not start issuing orders or shout. A volunteer must do his work quietly otherwise he increases disorder. Shouts of 'silence' and 'sit down' or 'make way' should not be uttered by volunteers. Secondly, pushing should be avoided except where absolutely necessary. You cannot push a huge crowd. You only irritate it. But an appeal to the crowd to go back or to make room usually meets with a satisfactory response.

The idea that rings should be formed around persons to protect them from the crowd is wrong. A ringed person finds greater difficulty in going through a crowd. In a procession people should be asked to keep standing and volunteers should also remain standing at their posts. No attempt should be made by volunteers or the crowd to follow leaders.

These are just a few odd hints that I am suggesting. There are many other things which I should like to tell the volunteers if I had the time. I hope they will learn them from their instructors. Above all, they must remember that each volunteer by his general bearing and efficiency creates a good or bad impression. He is a symbol and to some extent our powers of organisation and efficiency are judged by him. He must not let the good name of our organisation down. A small matter which is often forgotten is that volunteers and for the matter of that others, whenever they walk together, should march in step.

I hope that the Haripura Congress will result in the building up of an efficient volunteer corps of men and women in Gujarat. I send the volunteers there my greetings and good wishes.

34. New Year Greetings[1]

Those who were privileged to be present at the Harduaganj conference[2] saw a sight they will not forget. They saw a hundred thousand persons full of life, full of enthusiasm and full of hopes, who had tramped to this little village from afar. They camped in the open and sat under trees and neither the wintry weather nor cold nor rain damped their

1. Message to his countrymen, New Delhi, 31 December 1937. *The Hindu*, 1 January 1938.
2. See pp. 372-375.

ardour. It was the peasant India that was awake and expectant. Speeches and resolutions seemed unimportant, for the spoken and written words were dominated by the shining eyes and glowing hearts of the great multitude. The long night of their sorrow and misery seemed to be passing and they were impatient for the dawn of deliverance.

As the old year passes with all its burden of joy and sorrow, success and failure, despair and hope, I think of those hundred thousand ardent faces I saw at the conference, strong in hope, and the future seems to be mirrored in them. The old year passes leaving a legacy of conflicts and problems to the new year, leaving also this hope of dawn to those who laboured night-long. We have heavy burdens to carry, tremendous difficulties to face in India and the world, but we have also the strength and faith which will overcome all these obstacles. And so in faith and confidence, I send my new year greetings to the people of India, to the men and women, to our innumerable comrades and those especially who still suffer behind prison walls and in detention camps. May the new year bring us a measure of achievement to lighten the burdens on our suffering millions! May it take us, a united nation, a long way to the full freedom we crave!

35. To the General Secretary, A.I.C.C.[1]

Camp Bombay
January 5, 1938

Dear Comrade,

I understand that some Congress delegates have proposed my name for the presidentship of the next Congress. I have no desire to stand for this election and would request you to withdraw my name from this contest. I shall also thank you if you will kindly announce this fact in the press so that people might not vote for me by mistake.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-81/1937-38, p. 11, N.M.M.L.

36. To Sri Prakasa[1]

Allahabad
January 31, 1938

My dear Prakasa,

I have your two letters dated the 26th and the 28th. Also your little book[2] and the stamp book and the slip book. Thank you very much for them. I am all for these contraptions which make our life easier and more efficient.

I am writing briefly to you now as I am leaving for Wardha. Perhaps I shall write more fully later on, better still, have a talk with you. I realise fully the difficulties that are cropping up in our public life.[3] But I think they are largely inevitable in our present state of growth. We may not shirk our jobs when the burden becomes heavy. For my own part I do not know yet what I shall do after the Haripura Congress. I feel very tired mentally and the desire to run away, for a while at least, is strong. But where can one run to and how can one run away from one's own mind?

I am quite clear in my own mind that in some capacity or other you and I and others like us will have to continue to shoulder the burden. I am, therefore, also clear that you should become a delegate and a member of the A.I.C.C. Whether you become a member of the Working Committee or not can be decided later. I think you should. As a matter of fact I had included your name in the first list that I prepared at Lucknow two years ago. But the list, as it emerged ultimately, had little to do with my choice. However, much depends on how things fashion out at Haripura. In any event you should be a member of the A.I.C.C. . . .

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. He had written a book containing simple rules of conduct and citizenship.
3. Sri Prakasa was appointed supervisor for the election of delegates from U.P. to the Haripura Congress and also of the assembly elections. He resigned in face of opposition from many Congressmen in the U.P.P.C.C.

37. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Allahabad
16-4-38

My dear Rajendra Babu,

Your letter about Shaukat and Zaheer.[2] I do not understand their haste and their reluctance to inform Sir Sikandar Hayat before the final step is taken. This does not show strength of mind. If they cannot resist Sir Sikandar's wishes now, how will they be able to do so later?

Of course both of them will be welcome to the Congress and they should be told so. But the manner of their coming should be such as to cause the least resentment and should facilitate their future work, whatever this might be. If they suddenly resign today and are taken up by you tomorrow, this will lead to the impression that you have perhaps induced them to resign to put Sikandar Hayat in a false position. Then again what are they to do in the Congress after they resign? A young military officer is seldom fitted to do anything else and is peculiarly unfitted for public work. They have no such background or training. Again, it is all very well for them to say that they will reduce their expenditure and live simply. Probably they have little idea of what this means. So far each of them must have been spending Rs. 600 or so a month (adding the allowance from Sir Sikandar). It will be very difficult for them to reduce this standard to Congress limits. In any event, it will be undesirable for the Congress to give them any allowance straight off after their resignation from the army. This will be adversely criticised and will make a bad impression.

A mere negative dislike of any service may be good enough for resignation, but it will not take far in any positive work for the Congress. If they are really keen on doing Congress work then they must face the initial difficulties bravely—inform their father, etc.—and take the final step after full deliberation and consultation. I do not for the moment see what they can do in Bihar or for that matter in the U.P. Perhaps they might be more useful in the Punjab but they will not like the idea of working there near their father (one of Sikandar Hayat's cousins has recently joined the Congress in the Punjab).

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.
2. Shaukat, the son of Sikandar Hayat Khan, and his friend Zaheer, lieutenants in the army, wanted to resign and join the Congress as they objected to the discriminatory treatment of Indians in the army. Jawaharlal mistook Zaheer also for Sikandar Hayat Khan's son.

I think they must realise, if they have any sense, that a false and hurried step now will not be good for them or the Congress. Their obvious course is to inform Sir Sikandar, give him a little time, and then take the step. Even so, this step should not be followed immediately after by a formal engagement by the Congress. They should take their time, consult others. For instance, I shall be glad to meet them and discuss their future with them. They might see Mahmud also.

If they have finally decided to resign without reference to Sir Sikandar then that is their look-out. This step should be taken without reference to the Congress and without any help from the Congress. They should be told of course that they will be welcomed in the Congress whenever they choose to come but this coming, to begin with, can only be as ordinary members. Nothing else should follow till a decent interval has passed. During this interval they can consult people and try to find out exactly what they can do.

I wanted to find out from Ashraf if he knew these young men but Ashraf has gone to the city and is not available at present.

I do think that you should not engage them in any Congress activity immediately after resignation—should they resign now. Besides, I do not suppose resignations from the army take effect immediately. This will take time and Sir Sikandar will get to know and bring pressure to bear upon them. If they are unable to withstand this pressure, then the resignation might be withdrawn. If you have made any commitment, you might then be placed in a false position.

As for the work they might be asked to do, I can make no suggestion whatever. I should like to meet them. Is it possible for them to come to Allahabad? I shall be here till the 23rd night and shall then go to Lucknow for two or three days.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal

6

VISITS TO NORTH WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE

1. Bombing and Kidnapping on the Frontier[1]

Less than two months ago the British Government addressed a communication to the Spanish Government and the insurgents in Spain asking both of them to refrain from bombing the civil population from the air. This remonstrance was sent to both the warring groups in Spain, but as a matter of fact the immediate occasion for it was the bombing of some of the towns in the Basque country, largely by German and Italian aeroplanes in the service of General Franco.[2] For nearly a year, ever since the outbreak of the insurrection in Spain and its invasion by foreign forces, the world has been sickened by accounts of the barbarities perpetrated by the fascist military clique in that unhappy country. Even so the bombing of Guernica, an unfortified city, with incendiary bombs, the killing thereby of 800 civilians, and the destruction of a large part of the city came as a terrible shock to the peoples of the world.

The British Government sent a pious note of protest and remonstrance; that is its chief function now in foreign affairs. And yet, just then, that same British Government was indulging in bombing from the air across the north west frontier of India. It was a strange and significant coincidence demonstrating in a flash the true nature and hypocrisy of modern imperialism.

How does the thing that is monstrous and horrible in Spain become justifiable in India or across her frontier? Whatever the so-called justification might be, frightfulness remains frightfulness, and there are certain standards of conduct which can only be ignored and set aside at peril to the civilisation and culture which the world has so painfully built up through long years of travail. All over the world people realise this and raise their voices against this new barbarism of bombing of civilians from the air. But fascism and imperialism, twin brothers, are impervious to this widespread opinion, are wholly insensitive to the suffering of innocent human beings and to the crash of civilisation and the collapse of much that humanity cherishes. They carry on with their bombs from the air and destroy or maim impartially man and woman, boy and girl, and the child at the breast.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 22 June 1937. *The Leader*, 26 June 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 203-212.
2. (b. 1892); Spanish soldier, organizer and leader of the rebel forces in the Spanish civil war, 1936-39; head of the Spanish state since 1940.

But humanity apart, let us examine this bombing business across the frontier. The Congress has condemned it,[3] as every sensitive person needs must, and it has further condemned the real motive force behind it, the so-called forward policy at the frontier. We are told, however, that the British Government indulged in this bombing in order to rescue and protect girls who had been kidnapped. It is strange that even kidnapping of girls should fit in with the frontier policy of the government, just as communalism fits in with its larger Indian policy. Memories of how the kidnapping of missionaries in various parts of the world helped in spreading the empires of various imperialist powers come back to us. Do we see a like process in operation at the frontier?

Now it is clear and beyond possibility of argument that the kidnapping of girls is a barbarous and inhuman thing and we cannot tolerate it. A government that cannot prevent it demonstrates its own incompetence. But it is also clear to every tyro in politics that air-bombing and military expeditions do not materialise unless there are important reasons of policy behind them. What that policy in India has been and is, we all know. For generations past it has messed about the frontier, ostensibly trying to solve the problem, in effect worsening it. One may argue whether this failure is due to sheer incompetence, or to a desire not to solve the problem, so that it may continue as a constant irritant and an excuse for periodical frontier operations and their inevitable reactions on Indian politics, or to both. But almost everybody is agreed that British policy on the frontier has been a complete failure.

That is true on the face of it and yet that is too simple a statement to make, for the British people are no fools, and in framing their imperial policies they do not stop at the frontier; they look far beyond it. In the old days they looked at the Tsar and his advancing empire; now the Tsar has gone past recall, but the same fascination forces them to look at the wide-flung Soviet territories which almost touch the frontiers of India. In this area of Central Asia they see threats to their Indian empire, to the routes to India, to their world position. In the great crises

3. The Faizpur Congress had condemned the punitive measures and the policy that necessitated inhuman and barbarous methods, like bombing from the air, which led to frequent military raids across the frontier and stated its belief that "friendly relations and peace can be established without much difficulty if the trans-border tribes are treated as friends and good neighbours and are not interfered with on the pretext of spreading civilization, or by making military roads under the guise of rendering economic assistance or otherwise...." It further added : "The charge laid against the Frontier Pathan tribes as being untamed, fierce, truculent and aggressive is without foundation and appears to be made with the object of justifying unwarranted interference and a heavy permanent military expenditure...."

that loom ahead, the Indian frontier and the adjoining countries may well have decisive importance. It is true that the Soviet Union desires peace more ardently than any other country in the world. It is also true that the Soviet Union has tried hard to make friends with England. Yet the inherent antagonisms of the two systems remain and may become even more evident when crisis comes. We have seen how official England, even at the cost of minor interests and prestige, has indirectly aided the insurgents in Spain and supported the Nazi policy in Europe. The true kinship of imperialism with fascism affected British foreign policy more than many other considerations.

Thus the frontier of India and the lands beyond it are regarded by the government as a probable theatre of war, and all their policy is directed to strengthening themselves there for war purposes. It is not a policy of pacification of and cooperation with the frontier tribes. It is ultimately one of advancing and occupying more territory so as to remove the theatre of war a little further away from their present base. The military mind, ignoring political and psychological factors, thinks only in terms of extending the bounds of an empire and thus making it safer from attack. As a matter of fact this process often ends in weakening a country or an empire. In India we have the military mind at work even in the civilian departments, for the civilian considers himself, and rightly, as much a member of a foreign army of occupation as the soldier.

All this has led to the so-called 'forward policy' at the frontier and because of this every excuse is good enough to be utilized for a forward move. It is with this background that we must consider recent events on and across the frontier.

This forward policy becomes an intense preparation for war, for the great war that is prophesied for the not distant future. Apart from our opposition and strong objection to this forward policy in itself, we have to oppose it as such a preparation for war. The Congress has declared itself against India's participation in an imperialist war and by that declaration and policy we must stand, not for quixotic reasons, but in the solid and permanent interests of the people of India and their freedom.

The forward policy has another aspect, a communal one. Just as the canker of communalism, fostered by imperialism, weakens and injures our public life and our struggle for freedom, so also the forward policy introduces that canker at the frontier and creates trouble between India and her neighbours. The policy of Britain at the frontier has been alternately to bribe and terrorise the frontier tribes. That is a foolish policy, foredoomed to failure. That certainly can never be the policy of a free India towards them. The Congress has repeatedly declared that it has

no quarrel whatsoever with our neighbours and that it desires to cultivate friendly and cooperative relations with them. Thus the forward policy of the British Government comes into direct conflict with our intentions and creates new problems which will be difficult of solution in the future. We must try to prevent that happening as far as we can, and this makes it necessary for us to hold hard to these fundamental principles of ours and not allow ourselves to be swept away by anything else.

I am quite convinced that the trouble at the frontier can be ended by a friendly approach on our part, if we were free to make that approach. One man alone, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, loved on either side of the frontier, could settle it, but under the British dispensation, he may not even enter his province. But even apart from Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, I can say with confidence that any approach by the Congress would meet with success. The chiefs of the frontier tribes would realise soon enough that our interests and theirs were not in conflict and they would cooperate with us in putting an end to the scandal of kidnappings and raiding expeditions. They would realise also that any other course than this would imperil the freedom that they have got, for British imperialism is determined to march further and further in pursuance of its forward policy. They play into the hands of this imperialism by giving it pretexts for action, and they create an unfriendly feeling in India by being parties to kidnappings and raids.

Let us examine briefly the recent occurrences on the frontier. A village girl of about 15 or 16, Ram Kuar, apparently eloped with someone. This incident, which was a purely local and personal affair and had no larger significance, suddenly assumed importance and excited communal passions in the neighbourhood. Candidates for municipal and assembly elections exploited it, such is the virtue of communal electorates. The matter was clearly one to be settled privately or through a court in accordance with the wishes of the girl herself. Neither Hinduism nor Islam profited or suffered by such an incident. A court intervened and it is interesting to note that the offence, for which the man who had accompanied Ram Kuar was ultimately sentenced, was based on the minority of the girl, she being just under 16. It was not a case of forcible abduction. The girl made various contradictory statements, as almost any girl might have done under such extraordinary circumstances.

Perhaps the incident might have ended there. But the assembly elections gave it further life for the candidates made full use of it. This incident had nothing to do with Waziristan or the frontier tribes. In Waziristan about that time some trouble had already started; this had

no connection whatever with Ram Kuar's case. The Waziris were acting against the British Government for some reasons of their own. But the growth of communal passions, chiefly due to the propaganda about Ram Kuar's case during the election campaign, affected the Waziris also and this produced unfortunate results soon after the election was over. Four Hindu girls were forcibly kidnapped by some Waziris aided by local bad characters, presumably to avenge Ram Kuar. This was followed later by many cases of dacoities.

All this, as far as I can make out, is confined to Bannu district. It is worth noting that it was in this very district that Congress candidates fared badly during the assembly elections. Where Congress is stronger no such thing has happened. Communalism and trouble go hand in hand.

These kidnappings and dacoities had two obvious consequences. The small minority of Hindus living in the rural areas were naturally terrified and confounded. What frightened them most was the fact that, as a rule, their Muslim neighbours, who had formed the large majority of the population, did not help them or protect them. Worse even than the actual occurrences were the rumours that were spread.

The second consequence was the advance of the forward policy. It had ample excuse now. Were they not going forward to punish those who kidnapped and committed dacoities on innocent and defenceless people? And so, claiming to be protectors of the weak, they marched ahead to fulfil the plans of British imperialism, and they bombed right and left with goodwill, and left a track of ruin and misery behind them.

It is easy to understand the reaction of the small minority of terrified Hindus. It is also easy to understand the anger of the hill tribes who saw this ruin and death surrounding them and to some extent connected it with the communal controversy. Nevertheless it was and is folly for both to think or act in terms of communalism; for both are victims of that larger policy of imperialism which marches on regardless of human suffering. For the Hindus in the Frontier Province to support imperialism and its policy is not only the height of folly and cowardice but also to invite ruin for themselves. They cannot live and prosper in that province except in cooperation with, and with the goodwill of, their neighbours. For their Muslim neighbours in these villages to look on while kidnapping and dacoity take place almost before their eyes is to degrade themselves before the world. That is not the way of neighbours. For the frontier tribes to associate themselves in any way with kidnapping and raiding is to discredit themselves and to imperil their freedom.

Our policy is clear. We cannot approve of the forward policy of the government, because that is a discredited policy, because it strikes at the very root of our struggle for freedom, because it makes enemies of our friends, because it is a preparation for war, and because it is an imperialist policy. We can never tolerate the barbarity and inhumanity of bombing from the air. Our approach to the frontier problem would be entirely different; it would be based on friendship and cooperation and respect for the freedom of others; and an attempt to find an economic solution for their difficulties.

But it is equally clear that we cannot tolerate kidnappings and dacoities and raids. Our sympathies must go out to those who suffer from these and it is our bounden duty to protect them. The surest protection, we feel, will come from a friendly approach and the removal of communal passions. Those who seek to feed these passions, either on the Hindu or the Muslim side, are friends of neither the Hindus nor the Muslims. The Congress has already done good work in the Frontier Province in this respect and it is to be noted that the recent trouble has been largely confined to Bannu district where unfortunately the Congress organisation is weak. Dr. Khan Sahib, the Congress leader in the Frontier Province, has already given a straight and a brave lead and I trust that Hindus and Muslims alike will follow it. This is not a question of Hindu or Muslim, but of our dignity and good repute, our intelligence and good sense, to whatever religious faith we may belong, and of Indian freedom itself.

2. To E.B. Shawe[1]

Allahabad
July 20, 1937

Dear Mr. Shawe,

I owe you an apology for the delay in answering your letter of June 11th.

I do not think there was any weakness in my argument regarding the frontier. It is always possible for the wrong man to become popular and to exercise his influence in a wrong direction. That danger has to be faced everywhere. What we want is the right man and the right policy. If we have both then success is bound to come sooner or later.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

A wrong man pursuing a wrong policy may injure the cause but the policy is doomed to failure. Some time back I issued a long statement[2] in regard to the frontier. You must have seen it.

As for my putting you in touch with a Congress thinker in Delhi, it is a little difficult for me to pick and choose people. I do not know who is of my persuasion and who is not, or indeed if there is anyone entirely of my persuasion. But I might suggest to you two persons who represent different persuasions within the Congress. One is Professor Indra[3] and the other Farid-ul-Haq Ansari.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. See the preceding item.
3. Indra Vidyavachaspati (1891-1960); a leading Congressman of Delhi; a Sanskrit scholar, and professor at Gurukul Kangri in Hardwar before joining the non-cooperation movement; edited *Vijaya* and *Arjun*, Hindi newspapers published from Delhi.

3. The Task Before the Country[1]

For long years I had cherished a desire to come to you but many obstacles came in the way of our meeting. That desire has now been fulfilled at long last. You can imagine my feelings at the wonderful reception you gave me. The honour you do is not to me personally but to the great Congress organisation which is a splendid asset for India; whatever we do for it is not much.

Just as the Frontier tops other provinces on the Indian map, so does it even in sacrifices in the struggle for freedom. Little wonder then that I and all India feel immensely proud of it.

I am sorry that I cannot go to every district of the province during my brief stay but my desire to come to the province was so powerful that I did not want to let this opportunity go.

We have a great task before us. I have travelled throughout this vast country and met different persons for understanding the common bond

1. Speech at Peshawar, 14 October 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 16 October 1937 and *The Bombay Chronicle*, 16 October 1937.

uniting thirty seven crores of Indians. I have found that slavery is not the only bond that binds us. The whole country is also knit together with the urge for becoming free. When a nation is subjugated, slavery enters its very soul and it becomes difficult to resurrect a dead nation. We think that we shall never be free. This is our weakness. Even with education we have only become greater slaves. India is not poor. She has a rich soil and plenty of labour and yet the people in the country are starving and are unemployed. But despite the oppression the poor peasants have faced their problems courageously and by their grit and determination bewildered everyone. This gives us the hope that the country's strength is growing and India is bound to be free. However, in the task before us we have to act wisely and with confidence.

4. On Communal Differences[1]

As an expression of your love and admiration for Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, you have bestowed the title of *Fakhr-e-Afghan*[2] upon him. It would be more appropriate if you call him *Fakhr-e-Hindustan*.[3] The frontier is not only a historic but a living part of India. Our differences are mainly manufactured and intelligent people should not be taken in by these. The British Government are interested in these differences which are created under the garb of religion. The Congress has declared freedom for all religions and cultures. Communal questions take the form of a demand for greater representation in the legislatures or the services. The real question before the country is of making a new constitution through a constituent assembly. The Congress is moving in that direction.

The people of the frontier are brave but they should know that mere percentage will not increase a nation's strength. Mere counting of heads does not make a nation strong. Had it been so India would not have been a slave nation at all. A different yardstick is used for measuring national strength.

1. Speech at Peshawar, 16 October 1937. From *The Hindu*, 17 October 1937.
2. Pride of the Afghans.
3. Pride of India.

IN THE NORTH WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE, OCTOBER 1937

WITH SUBHAS BOSE, CALCUTTA, 4 NOVEMBER 1937

There is an urgent need for a united effort for gaining and retaining freedom. A mere replacement of high English officials by Indian officials will not free India. We are not against officials but against the system of government. It is true that foreigners, of right, cannot become officials in our land, but that is a different question. Our fight is proceeding on different principles. As long as the British army is present in India we cannot be free. That army is sitting over the heads of all of us. We have only been given some power so that we may not drift more towards revolution. But even that is a sign of our increasing strength. When the power is transferred from a handful of Englishmen to the Indian nation then Swaraj will be attained. We do not want the power to remain with a handful of men, whether English or Indian. We want freedom so that our country is able to banish poverty and compete with other countries in all respects.

5. On the Frontier Problem[1]

The Frontier Province has recently got a Congress ministry.[2] I do not know much about its achievements, but the atmosphere has become freer. The province heaves a sigh of relief and a feeling of satisfaction is felt all around. But the hands of even the Congress ministry are tied down. The major portion of money is earmarked for British interests and only a small portion is left for the people.

We do not want to see the hand of the British Government in shaping the country's constitution, nor do we want a constitution solely made by elders. We want adult franchise for a constituent assembly. That is the only method for solving India's problems. There would not be any communal question in this method as everybody would get an equal share. The talk of one community suppressing another is absurd.

The Congress ministries cannot do much. They will themselves have to contribute largely to the fight for freedom which is bound to come. Apart from the British Government being an obstacle, there are other obstacles as well in the way of our freedom. Some people create these obstacles either out of their love for the British Government or because they think themselves to be the progeny of the British Government, and stand in the way of India's freedom. Around the costly palaces of

1. Speech at Peshawar, 16 October 1937. From *The Hindu*, 18 October 1937.
2. See p. 261.

the princes, there are mud houses where live millions of naked and starving people. These palaces have been built with the sweated labour of these starving millions. Wherever I go, crowds come to listen to me, partly out of their love for the Congress, but mainly because of their urge for solving the problems of poverty and unemployment.

These questions have not been created by a few revolutionary leaders. Rather, the revolutionary atmosphere has created the revolutionary leaders. Hunger, poverty and unemployment have become universal. That is so even outside India. In China, bombs are being rained. In Palestine, Arabs are being suppressed. No news comes from Palestine except that the Arab Higher Committee[2] has been declared unlawful. We know what all that means. That means that repression is rampant there and is being faced bravely.

A great war is imminent and India will certainly be affected thereby. If the British Government is involved in a world war, it will look to us for help. In the last World War we had committed a folly. We are not going to be taken in again. The Congress has been declaring for two years that we will not join such a war. Nor can we join a war by which the power of Britain might increase. We do not want to entrust the fate of India to imperialistic wars. The decision on this question rests with us. The British Government will suddenly declare war and we are proclaiming our resolve not to fight.

The Waziris are our brothers and we understand each other. Then, why are they being suppressed with India's money and in India's name? Why have we the frontier expeditions every year? A government which has not solved the frontier problem for the last 50 years is, indeed, a very worthless government. If we had the power, we would have settled it long ago. We would have taken the difficulties of the independent tribes as our own and found some solution. Two years ago a gentleman, unfriendly to India, asked me in England what would befall India if the British army were suddenly withdrawn from the Indian frontier. I replied that in that contingency there would be general rejoicings and illuminations on both sides of the border. If this problem is left to the Frontier Gandhi, he can solve it in no time. As a matter of fact, any person can solve it as it is not a complicated problem. It is the British policy which is involving India for nothing and getting her a bad name.

India can face these problems easily. The Congress has proved that it can fight the strongest government. The Congress is a representative body. Its leaders are worthy men. I appeal to you to strengthen the

2. It was formed in April 1936 and it called for the suspension of Jewish immigration.

Congress organisation and to form a network of Congress committees. We are determined to be free. We have the strength in our arms and can use the sword and the musket, but we have evolved the better and more effective method of achieving our goal through nonviolence. Our united and nonviolent efforts have left the government in a quandary. And we have succeeded a lot. If the leaders are arrested, we should not get puzzled. Great revolutionary changes are going to take place in the world. For removing poverty from the land we have first to capture political power. We should do that with fire in our hearts and coolness in our heads.

6. Parting Message to the Frontier[1]

Three days in the Frontier Province—three brief days spent there—and I saw with my own eyes this historic gateway of India, rich with the memories of our long past, rich also with the memories of the recent brave deeds and sufferings for the sake of the freedom of India. I saw the gallant people of this northern tip of India; their virile enthusiasm and discipline and frank and simple nature captured my heart. The freedom of India has no other stouter soldiers, no braver defenders, and to have comrades such as these is a joyous privilege and a rare delight. As guardians of the gateway of India, they are also the foremost among the fighters and guardians of our national freedom. They can learn much from the sophisticated people of other provinces but others can learn much of courage and brave endurance and splendid discipline and freedom from narrow sectarianism from these dear comrades of ours in the north, and march together and struggle side by side and win together in that great enterprise of India's freedom which draws our millions ever forward. To the north I brought admiration and comradely greetings of the people of other provinces. Affection and hospitality overwhelmed me and now I go back with living and throbbing pictures in my mind and tens of thousands of voices are ringing in my ears. These voices pull me back, and even as I go away, the call of the frontier comes to me. Soon I hope to renew my acquaintance with these comrades of the north.

1. Statement to the press, Peshawar, 18 October 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 19 October 1937.

7. Impressions of His Visit to the Frontier[1]

Question: On your return from the frontier, you have contrasted the 'quiet dignity' of the frontier Muslims with the 'hysteria' of the communalist Muslim League. Is the contrast quite so legitimate and are not the frontier people a distinct cultural unit, separate from the rest of India? There is of course such a thing as the essential unity of India and of her cultural past which hurdles over the many diversities of race and religion, but are the frontier people a part of this essential unity?

Jawaharlal Nehru: During my brief tour in the frontier, I was personally intensely conscious of the unity of India. It may be that this was due to a certain subjective state, but I think that this had an objective foundation also. I was also conscious of the fact that the people of the Frontier Province thought in terms of Indian unity and Indian freedom. Probably their thoughts were vague and undefined and could not bear cross examination; nevertheless, they were there as a solid obvious fact. They were continually referring both in their public addresses and in their private talks to the freedom of India and not to any local freedom of their own. Probably this sense of Indian unity and freedom has consciously grown in them in recent years since the noncooperation movement and after, but I imagine that the background of it was present long before. It is true that they have a strong feeling of kinship with the people across the border, with the border tribes in the semi-independent area beyond India and in Afghanistan. Even with the Afghans proper they have the feeling of kinship because of language and cultural relations, but politically speaking they look very definitely to India. It is obvious that the tightening of the political bonds between the Frontier Province and the rest of India has been due to common sacrifices for a common cause.

One thing is very apparent in the frontier and that is the absence of what is known as the communal spirit in the rest of India. Even in matters of religion, though they are undoubtedly religious in a broad sense, they are far removed from bigotry. They are a very child-like people with the virtues and failings of children. It is not easy for them to intrigue and so their actions have a certain simplicity and sincerity which commands attention. Their customs also afford

1. This interview taken by Ram Manohar Lohia was printed in the *Congress Socialist*, 6 November 1937.

a pleasant contrast to some of the customs prevailing in other parts of India. For instance, *purdah* is not very prevalent except in cities and the further away one goes the less of it there is. There is a regular corps of Pathan women volunteers among the Red Shirts. In the tribal areas, I am told, there is no *purdah* at all.

> Q: For almost a year now, the border tribes of the frontier are continuing the tradition which, with the last Burmese war, came to a definite close in the rest of India. Against the pounding technique of imperialism, they have mainly their stout hearts to defend them. What moves these hearts?

JN: I do not know enough about these tribes to say much. But one thing is obvious, that their love for independence is something fierce and unquenchable. Only a process approaching extermination is likely to end it. The only possible approach to them will have to be a friendly approach giving them perfect freedom. To any hostile approach they will put up, as they have put up in the past, an unbending resistance. But they are very susceptible to friendship and they will do almost anything for those whom they consider their friends. A friendly approach therefore is certain to be rewarded with the best of results. It must be remembered that this tribal area is a narrow strip of territory from 50 to 80 miles across containing sparse population. The numbers affected are thus relatively small. They are terribly poor and their problems are basically economic. It should not be difficult to solve them from the economic point of view but that solution itself will fail if it involves forcible political suppression. Whatever they do, they will have to do it willingly.

> Q: The Indian National Congress has time and again expressed its solidarity with the tribes' fierce desire for freedom. The Congress has approached the tribes in an eminently friendly manner. Could the tribesmen be unaware of this approach? Could they also be unaware of the fact that the Congress is fighting for the freedom of India as a whole? Difficulties might sometimes arise which cause confusion but what is the basic relation between the frontier tribes and the rest of India?

JN: Some time back there was a report in the newspapers that the Waziri leader had delivered a speech in which he condemned the kidnappings that had taken place and said that some mischief-makers were responsible for them. So far as he was concerned, he was strongly

opposed to such crimes as they brought discredit to him and his followers. He would do everything in his power to punish the miscreants. Indeed, he invited the leaders of the national movement to come and enquire on the spot. It was not possible under the circumstances for any such enquiry to be held but I think that in this matter of kidnappings his statement was a perfectly *bona fide* one. It was obviously not to his interest that such things should occur. He is up against a big thing, that is, the forward policy of the British Government, and the kidnapping of a few individuals does not help. It only prejudices people against him. We must remember that these tribal people are no fools, although they are simple, more or less uneducated folk. Men who have the power of organisation and resistance that their leaders have shown must have some understanding of events. I feel sure that such men, when approached in a right way and in a free manner, will be willing to meet that approach more than half way. It is not a pleasant or an easy thing for them to continue to suffer the terrible hardships which modern war with its aeroplanes and bombings brings. They would like an honourable way out, but they would not look at anything which involves their subjection. There should be no difficulty in a free India in dealing with them on friendly terms.

Q: The forward policy of the government, in spite of the heavy expenditure involved, has been a patent failure. Is not the heavy list of casualties, notwithstanding its gross official under-estimate, an eloquent testimony of the failure?

JN: The forward policy of the British Government involving periodical little wars has been a patent failure even from the point of view of the British Government. It has not succeeded in subduing the tribes; only the heavy cost of it has fallen on India. It is stated that recent operations in Waziristan have cost a lakh of rupees a day. The air-bombing expeditions, though they involve a great deal of damage and destruction, have not shaken the morale of the tribal people. Whatever other policy might be adopted, the present British policy must be given up.

Q: Could you not, after your tour throughout the country, say that the morale of the Indian people as a whole has mounted considerably and the day of freedom is within sight?

JN: I must say that I was deeply impressed by the people of the Frontier Province. I am used to big crowds and popular enthusiasm but the discipline and quiet dignity of these people were striking. The

words they uttered did not seem to be airy flourishes meaning little. They seemed to mirror the desire of their hearts and behind them they carried the impression of reserves of strength. The whole of India has reason to be proud of these frontier people and inevitably when India is a free country, as it should be before many years are out, they will have an honoured place in it.

The frontier people will of course have an honoured place in free India. Even today, while falling in line with the national development, they have showed what an effective vanguard they can be. Imbued with a morality of life and death, entirely dissimilar to that of the rest of India, they have yet accepted the civilization of peace and given the Congress technique a deeper import.

It may be that these frontier people may teach us many a lesson. They are not men of words and any resolution for them is something which has to be translated into deeds. The most significant example of this has been their adherence to the policy of nonviolence during our struggle. This policy has affected the whole of India deeply and it has been largely imbibed by the people as a whole, who have gradually come to recognise its efficacy. Still, for many, it is a synonym for inactivity and for some it is a cloak for cowardice. But nobody can accuse the Pathans of physical cowardice in a struggle. If they have accepted nonviolence and acted up to it, it is through their strength, not weakness. Their example is thus full of meaning for all of us and it will help us to develop this technique even further combining peaceful action with efficient action leading to results.

> Q: The world is full of hatred and wars and yet there are large masses of men of peace. To them, all struggles against evil, pre-eminently the Indian struggle, have a deep import. All over the world now there is an anxiety for peaceful developments and all popular movements give full expression to them. They have their own methods of reducing the political and economic power of the bankers, armament manufacturers, big capitalists and the like. No doubt, those methods are revolutionary in nature, as they hit at the reactionary policies and reduce their potentialities for launching a general offensive. Is there a possibility of this trend continuing?

JN: The development of popular mass movements in other countries slows an ever-growing reliance on a peaceful technique of struggle. This is in contrast with the aggressive and blatant violence of fascist countries. Where these peaceful methods have been pursued, strength has been built up for the popular cause, as in France the *front populaire.* In Spain,

this happened also to a large extent but militarist and fascist violence brought about a crisis. What will happen in other countries, it is difficult to say. But it seems, in any event, the right and the expedient course for a people's front movement to be built up on peaceful lines. In India probably the chances and the advantages of such a peaceful development of strength are greater than elsewhere. Danger here as elsewhere comes from possible violence from the other side. It should be remembered also that the background of the Indian struggle, though essentially peaceful, is equally dynamic and ultimately coercive. Therefore, the old-styled pacifist doctrine of passivity has no application to our nonviolent dynamic struggle, which is far from being passive.

8. On His Second Visit to the Frontier[1]

The Faqir of Ipi[2] and leading Waziri chiefs vehemently resented the gross accusations levelled against them by interested persons who had their own axes to grind. The letter was addressed to me as Congress President, and the invitation was extended to me and other Congress leaders to visit the territory and verify the truth of their assertions. The letter conveyed their firm resolve to shed the last drop of their blood to regain their integrity and freedom. The Faqir unequivocally condemned the action of the raiders, adding that they proved a slur on the fair name of Islam and the tribes. I do not question the veracity of the statement. Friendly relations with neighbours are not only essential for the safety of the Indians but are necessary for the political advancement of India. Left to themselves, the Congress and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan are competent to tackle the problem to prevent all inroads of the Waziris.

Do you think the British Government invaded Waziristan because one or two or some Hindu women were kidnapped? That is not the way of the British Government. There are other easier ways to get back the women. But the fact remains that their interests are different. The trans-border territory is invaded in furtherance of imperialist designs to

1. Bannu, 26 January 1938. *The Hindustan Times*, 27 January 1938.
2. Haji Mirza Ali Khan, better known as Fakir of Ipi, (1890-1960); Imam of a mosque at Ipi; leader of the Waziris who led armed protests against the British Government.

push forward the frontiers and strengthen themselves. They make such occasions as tribal raids only a pretext. There can be no justification whatever for the waste of millions and billions of our money.

The Congress policy is to establish brotherly contacts with the neighbouring peoples, living in the trans-border territories and countries. They must trust us and we must trust them. With the help of our close relations, believing in each other's freedom, we must prevent the happening of anything undesirable or untoward.

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan can successfully solve the frontier problem. This province has produced this great man in whom all India takes pride. He has lifted the frontier men out of the morass, changing the whole atmosphere. He created the great army of Red Shirts, the Khudai Khidmatgars, and mobilized such an arms-loving race for a heroic non-violent struggle for freedom. It is a miracle that he has performed. The weapon of nonviolence is a mighty weapon. Only the bold and the daring can wield it. Cowards and weaklings cannot do anything with it. We challenged the British power boldly with this weapon. Through it the withering and drooping spirit of India gained vitality. Power alone can meet power. In an age where only air-bombers can face the air-bombers, not bows and arrows or even guns—weapons which have now become antiquated and useless, India forged this new weapon of non-violence to face a powerful enemy and shook the British Empire to its foundations.

The Hindus and the Sikhs fear insecurity due to the smallness of their number living in this part. Their plea is not proper and tenable. They have to share the joys and sorrows in common with the people inhabiting this province and create mutual confidence. Their strongest armour should be their friendship with them. No better safety can they get than through their ties of intimacy with the rest of the people.

I would appeal to all Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs to enlist themselves among Red Shirts to strengthen the Congress.

9. Farewell to the Frontier[1]

All the provinces of India, all the religious groups of India, have essentially the same task politically and economically and we must therefore

1. Speech at Dera Ismail Khan, 28 January 1938. From *The Tribune*, 29 January 1938.

all cooperate together in this great endeavour. The Congress is the only organisation which includes all within its wide fold and can successfully tackle our great problems as it has successfully faced the might of the British Empire. Therefore we must all strengthen the Congress.

I am bidding goodbye to the frontier for a while after my seven days' tour. During these seven days I have seen many unforgettable pictures of the present but often my mind has wandered to the past, for the frontier area is rich in memories of India's long history. For thousands of years caravan after caravan had trekked through the narrow passes of the north-west. Many strange and new peoples had come to this land of ours and were absorbed by India. The Aryans came long ago and influenced India tremendously. The Scythians and Turks and Huns also came and many of them settled down and even today there is much of Scythian blood in our Rajput races.

The other day I crossed the Indus almost at the spot where Alexander crossed it, and in my mind's picture I saw the Macedonian army entering the fertile plains of India. Later, Asoka the Great left imperishable memorials all over the frontier tracts. Peshawar became the capital of a great empire ruled by Kanishka spreading from the Vindhyas to Central Asia. It was a Buddhist empire. And then came to Peshawar, pilgrims and students in search of learning from the West and the Far East. It was the meeting place of three great cultures, the Indian, the Chinese and the Greco-Roman. Later again, the Arabs suddenly rose into prominence, and in one tremendous sweep of conquest spread from China to Spain. They knocked at the doors of India but did not enter.

It is well to remember that Islam was India's friendly neighbour for hundreds of years without any conquest or conflict. As such it was welcomed as India has always welcomed new thoughts and ideas from abroad and attempted to absorb them into its own synthesis. In the days of the greatness of Baghdad, when Haroun Al Rashid[2] was *khalifa*, scholars went to and fro between India and the Arab world, and many Sanskrit books were translated into Arabic. It was only when Central Asian conquerors came to India as invaders that there was conflict. This conflict was political, not religious, although it was exploited in the name of religion. Mahmud[3] came as a ruthless conqueror and looted India but how many people know that one of his best armies in Central Asia consisted of Indian and Hindu troops under a general named Tilak?

2. (766-809); the fifth caliph of the Abbasid dynasty of Iraq who had replaced the Umayyad as rulers of the Islamic world.
3. Mahmud, Sultan of Ghazni (d. 1030); succeeded to the throne of Ghazni in A.D. 986-87 and ruled till his death; made frequent plundering raids into India.

It was across these frontier tracts that India sent her message of religion and art to the Far East and so many pilgrims made long journeys to India in search of learning.

All these and many other pictures came to my mind as I wandered across the Frontier Province. And then I was rudely called back to the present with its poverty and misery and illiteracy and backwardness. But I thought also of the future that we hope to fashion when India would be free and end her poverty and flourish anew.

In spite of the poverty and backwardness of the frontier I have found many things there which fill me with hope, for the people are a magnificent people physically as also in their courage and love of freedom. With that firm foundation it is not difficult to build well and nobly. The tribal people I have met have also impressed me and I felt drawn to them. The friendship and welcome that they extended to me are precious memories. I am convinced that between them and the people of India there will be friendship and comradeship in the days to come when India is free and the nightmare of frontier troubles will be past.

Recently there was a conflict with the Waziris.[4] We must not blame a whole people for the misdeeds of a few. It is painful to learn of abductions and lootings and it is clear that every government must resist them and seek to end them. But what is the best way to do this? Surely, not the way of the British which failed dismally. The way of India would be one of friendship and an attempt to raise the simple and backward but brave people to higher levels. They live in their bare mountains and have few occupations except fighting and shooting. With education and suitable occupations and industries they will raise themselves and become our true guardians of the frontier.

I have always visualised India in terms of the unity of India, the identity of its major problems—freedom and poverty—and the objective of a united and free Indian nation with power in the hands of the masses.

I am happy to find how strong the hold of the Congress is in the frontier. I am also happy to see tens of thousands of smart Khudai Khidmatgars who are the volunteers of the Congress in the Frontier Province. Everybody, Hindu, Sikh or Muslim, can join them, for theirs is not a communal organization.

4. A case of abduction led to the armed protest by the Waziris against alleged government interference in the religious matters of the tribes. As military action proved inadequate, punitive air action was taken in parts of Waziristan.

The Hindu minority in the province is afraid of the great Muslim majority of 95 per cent and of the tribal people. But to be fear-ridden is no help. They must discard fear and even their womenfolk should do so. But at the same time they should live in friendship and cooperation with their neighbours.

During the past few years a remarkable change has come over the Frontier Province and a new spirit is evident. In spite of occasional troubles, this spirit of communal amity is growing. The growth of the Congress and the Khudai Khidmatgars has led to this but behind this vital and hopeful development there is that great and noble man, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who has already performed such miracles in the Frontier Province. He has made the war-like Pathan become an even braver soldier in our nonviolent struggle for freedom.

Nothing has impressed me so much as to see Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan surrounded by his people, each looking in the other's eyes with overwhelming affection and confidence. Well may we be proud of this great son of India.

Fakhr-e-Afghan, he is lovingly called but he is truly *Fakhr-e-Hind.* He is the dominating personality of the frontier and his influence extends across the border. He is a pillar of strength to the Congress and to communal unity and the cause of the masses. With a man like him both the minority and the majority are secure. For above everything he is a man of character and ideals and nothing can make him party to something he considers radically wrong.

There are difficulties of course and it is foolish to expect a complete change to come suddenly over the poor illiterate people of the frontier. But already the change is remarkable and in this change and in Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan lies the hope of amity and progress.

Let the minorities in the Frontier Province, therefore, discard their fear and suspicion and under the banner of the Congress and the leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan march ahead in confidence to the great goal we have in view.

10. To Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan[1]

Allahabad
29th April, 1938

My dear Khan Sahib,
Mahatmaji has sent me a copy of the note which Mahadeva Desai prepared on his frontier visit. I understand that this note has been sent

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-16/1938-39, pp. 71-72, N.M.M.L.

to you also. I need hardly tell you that I am greatly distressed at many things that are happening in the Frontier Province.[2] It is difficult to write about them. We are having great difficulties in all the provinces. But in the Frontier Province there is the additional obstacle of complete want of contacts. I pointed this out during my last visit and made certain suggestions, but nothing has come out of them.

All over India we find that our work suffers because of lack of organisation and lack of efficient office work. We are used to propaganda in the villages and we can do this well. But something is much more important now and this is organisation and the putting up of trained workers in offices. This is necessary in our Congress offices. Much more is necessary for the Congress ministries, otherwise the ministers have to rely completely on the permanent service which is usually, as you know, hostile to our methods of work. In the Frontier Province there is an utter lack of this office work and organisation and letters and telegrams remain unanswered and no reports come to us.

We are moving towards a big crisis in the world and we can only meet it if there is proper organisation and a common purpose animating us. If this is not there we will go to pieces and all our good work goes by the board. It is absolutely necessary therefore for all of us to meet frequently to discuss our difficulties and evolve common plans of action. Unless we meet we do not know each other's minds. Unfortunately your ill health has prevented you from attending the Congress and the Working Committee meetings. The doctor[3] has not attended any meeting for a long time. I do hope that both of you will make a point of attending the ministers' conference in Bombay on the 12th of May as well as the Working Committee later on.

You know that the Frontier Province looks up to you more than to any other person and the burden must be shouldered by you, in cooperation with the doctor. The two of you can do what you like there. It is therefore necessary that the two of you should be fully acquainted with the national and international developments.

I am not discussing specific cases. But I might mention that Abdulla Shah's case has upset me greatly.[4] I have read the judgment on the

2. It was reported that due to certain differences the Red Shirt organisation had threatened to separate itself from the Frontier Province Provincial Congress Committee.
3. Khan Sahib.
4. A government school teacher, sentenced to imprisonment for wrongful confinement of a Hindu girl, was set free and reemployed by the Frontier Government and compensated for the period spent in jail.

case and many other papers and I am convinced that a man like Abdulla Shah cannot be entrusted with the education of children. I am also certain that a payment to him of any part of his salary during the period he was in prison is highly improper and against public morality.

I am sailing for England on June 2nd and I shall be away for three or four months. I am going abroad not for the sake of health but to do work. At this stage of crisis it is important that we should remain in touch with international developments. As I am going away for some time I would particularly like to meet you and Khan Sahib before I go. This is why I repeat my request that both of you should come to Bombay for the ministers' meeting.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the doctor.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

7

VISIT TO ASSAM

four months [illegible] physical and mental plane of health [illegible]

[illegible] things [illegible] important that we should readily be [illegible]

1. To Secretary, Assam P.C.C.[1]

Allahabad
October 20, 1937

Dear Comrade,
Regarding my visit to Assam early in November please meet me in Calcutta on the 25th of this month when I can settle my provisional programme. The Sylhet and Surma valley people want me to give them three days. I am not sure if I shall be able to do so. If I can get away from Calcutta on the 1st of November, as I hope to, I can remain with you up to the 10th at the latest. If it is possible for you to give three days to the Surma valley, I shall be glad. The remaining days can be allotted to Assam.

I shall come there accompanied only by my secretary. No special arrangements are necessary about my diet except that I cannot take chillies and spices in my food. For the rest, I eat every kind of food, usually vegetarian, sometimes non-vegetarian. I take both tea and coffee and can do without either without any difficulty. I do not rest in the middle of the day. But I should like the day's programme to end early in the evening and not to start too early in the morning. Usually the programmes should be from 8 o'clock in the morning to 8 in the evening. The food supplied should not be rich and should be light and simple.

At big meetings it is difficult for me to speak without a loudspeaker. Therefore loudspeaker arrangements are desirable. It is better to have big meetings rather than a large number of small ones. In most centres I should like some time to meet the workers. If it is necessary to translate my Hindustani, please arrange for a suitable translator.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the secretary of the Sylhet Congress Committee. I shall be staying in Calcutta with Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, 1, Woodburn Park.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-4/1937-38, pp. 275-276, N.M.M.L.

2. Strengthen the Congress[1]

I have come to Assam, not enamoured of her natural beauties, but to preach the message of the Congress and the ideals of Swaraj.

What is the meaning of Swaraj? It means a democratic state where power will rest with the poor and will not be utilised for the benefit of a rich few. The Congress aims at the removal of poverty and unemployment of the people of the land. There cannot be two opinions about this inasmuch as the welfare of the cultivators and labourers is, at heart, of all, irrespective of the community or religion to which they belong. The Congress programme, based as it is on the live economic issues of the country, cannot be suspected of interfering with one's religion which is entirely an individual and private matter. The Congress has a well-knit organisation spread throughout the country and it is this organisational force which enables it to carry on the country's fight for Swaraj. And this again is made possible on account of the fact that the strength of the British Government is based on bullets and bayonets. The crux of the whole thing lies in the fact that the Congress has the people at its back. The charge that Congressmen are required to obey ready-made orders from above is absolutely untrue. It is the people themselves who shape and mould the policies of the Congress. In short, the Congress is nothing but a panchayat of the masses.

It is this strength which the Congress derived from the masses that made it possible, in the N.W.F. Province, Bombay, Madras and other provinces, for the persons who once rotted in jails, to become ministers, and they are now the masters of those very people who had put them in jails.

I would not be satisfied if I am to be ruled even by an Indian Viceroy, and it matters little to me who rules the country as long as the real power does not belong to the people of the country. And for acquiring this power, I make an earnest appeal to all of you to join the Congress and strengthen its organisation.

I have heard it said that some Assam politicians accuse all-India leaders that the latter have neglected this province so long. I say the leaders by themselves cannot endow an organisation with real strength unless it is fortified with the activities of the people whom the Congress

1. Speech at Dhubri, 27 November 1937. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 28 November 1937.

represents. Here, I would like to draw your attention to the conditions that prevailed in N.W.F. Province some years ago, and how by their own endeavours, unaided by outside leaders, they built up an organisation of labourers and kisans which soon became strong enough to attract the notice of other provinces and leaders. I hope Assam will not lag behind politically and will rise up to the occasion to strengthen the Congress organisation.

About the Dhubri match factory strike,[2] I feel that the mere fact that the workers have continued the strike for so long a period is sufficient to convince one of the justness of their cause.

India must get Swaraj today or tomorrow. Assam is not outside India and she will also get it. I ask the employers to read the signs of the times. Let them not act against the wishes of the people.

2. See *ante*, section 4, pp. 256-257.

3. To Bishnu Ram Medhi[1]

Camp Jorhat
December 1, 1937

Dear Comrade,[2]
You pointed out to me in the course of conversation the various difficulties in your way in enrolling members during the time fixed for this. Under our present rules the enrolment period ends by about the 30th September. Ordinarily most members are enrolled in the previous two or three months. In Assam, however, that is a period when little work of the kind can be done because of the heavy rains and floods.

Even earlier in the year, though it is possible to move about, the condition of the peasantry is not such as to enable you to enrol them in large numbers. They are poor of course and the only suitable time when you can enrol them is soon after the harvest. This harvest season is on now in December and there is only one harvest during the year.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-4/1937-38, pp. 39-49, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1890); joined noncooperation movement, 1920; president, Assam P.C.C., 1930-39; member, Assam Assembly, 1938; Minister for Finance and Revenue, Assam, 1946-50; Chief Minister, Assam, 1950-52 and 1956-58; Governor of Tamil Nadu, 1958-64.

The position thus is that unless you are allowed to enrol members during December and January you will be greatly handicapped in this work. Under a recent decision of the Working Committee, it has been laid down that members should not be enrolled from the date of the closing of the members' list to the general election, that is to say, in the present instance, from 30th September to sometime in January. This rule would obviously hit you hard.

I propose to put this matter before the Working Committee and to request them to relax the rule in your favour so as to permit you to enrol members during this period. Meanwhile, I do not wish you to suspend your work till such decision of the Working Committee. The Congress organisation in Assam is not as strong and as widespread as it should be and every effort should be made to push it on. I have seen myself that there is considerable popular enthusiasm for the Congress. The masses have to be reached. Their response will certainly be good. My present tour in Assam will also help you to carry on your organisational work. I want you, therefore, to push ahead even now with your membership campaign and to organise Congress committees in villages and bigger areas.

But please remember that all the members that you might make since the 30th September last should be entered in a new register. They should not be mixed up with the members on the register prepared up to 30th September. The new members will not be entitled to vote at the general election in January. They may however vote at a bye-election which may take place in the course of the next year, provided they have been on the rolls for three months previously.

I am giving this permission to you on my personal initiative and authority so that Congress work might not be hindered in Assam. I am anxious that the Congress organisation should develop here and should come in line with our other provinces. I have seen that the organisational side here is weak, although the material is good. In one district, the district Congress committee was itself a primary body and consisted of 60 members only. This was absurd. In these days when we talk of mass contact, for a district to have 60 primary members is extraordinary. Besides this, a district committee is not a primary committee and cannot be such. Primary committees should be village committees and town committees or a small number of villages grouped together to form a primary committee. The members on the rolls of these primary committees should then elect the district committees, which are thus elective bodies and in the nature of executive committees. The primary members are not district committee members. The primary members have also to elect the Congress delegates.

I have not got your provincial constitution with me but I suggest to you to consider and revise it carefully in the light of the All-India constitution and some other provincial constitutions. You might, for instance, get the constitution of the U.P.P.C.C. for reference. Our office will also give you such help as we can in this matter.

It seems to me that there is not sufficient encouragement and control from the top in the province. The material, as I have said, is good. The first thing to be done, therefore, is to reorganise your provincial office and make it an efficient, business-like concern, having fixed hours of work and keeping in constant touch with your district and local committees. You should have a special organising secretary as well as an inspector who goes round continuously inspecting the local offices and advising them how to keep their books and do their work. Accounts must be inspected regularly in all district and local committees, and instructions issued as to the proper ways of keeping registers and accounts.

You should also, together with your membership campaign, encourage the enlistment of volunteers in each village and local area. Village and other committees should enrol their own volunteers without waiting for instructors from outside. Such volunteers will not be very efficient but efficiency can come later. You should send someone to give instructions about volunteering if you can do so. But meanwhile the process of enrolling volunteers should be carried on.

All this is meant to encourage mass contact and to give a mass basis to the Congress organisation in Assam. You should therefore approach particularly all those people who may be slightly cut off from the Congress influence, such as Muslims, the hill tribes and the depressed classes. The basis of your organisation will inevitably be the peasantry and therefore you should keep the agrarian reforms ever before you and discuss this with the peasantry. Village Congress committees should be encouraged to discuss their own problems and refer them to you. You have also the problem of the tea garden workers. I am told that it is difficult for you to approach them and find out their grievances. Members of the assembly should ventilate these grievances and try to remove the obstructions in the way of their approach and organisation. In all these matters there should be a coordination of the activities of the Congress organisation with the Congress Party in the legislature. Members of the legislature should not only press forward the demands of the masses by way of resolutions and bills, but should also move in their constituencies and organise Congress committees there. They should always keep in touch with their constituents.

I do not know what rule you have about Congress members' allowances and the like in the assembly. This should be in keeping with the Working Committee's direction in the matter. It is also desirable that Congress members of the assembly should give a percentage, say 15% of their allowances, to the provincial Congress committee.

Finally, I should like you and your committee to remember that we are on the eve of big movements, possible conflicts and big changes. We have got a brief period of respite to prepare for this. If we do not take advantage of this period to build up our organisation and to make it strong and efficient and widespread, we shall lose the great opportunity that is coming to us.

Three matters have been continually referred to me since my arrival in Assam. These are the opium question, Sylhet, and the immigration question involving the line system.

So far as the opium question is concerned, your policy should be clear and definite. You must stand for the complete suppression of opium, subject, at the most, to the sale of opium on medical licence. You should criticise the government also in this behalf vigorously. This has long been a world question and you have the sympathy in this matter not only of the rest of India but of the world at large. For Assam, opium is a far greater evil than even liquor and therefore it is desirable to concentrate on it. Of course, care should be taken not to replace opium with liquor as the government may well try to do for the sake of revenue. This opium question should be raised continually both in the assembly and in outside agitations.

In regard to Sylhet, the general policy of the Congress is quite clear and, indeed, Sylhet already belongs to the Bengal Congress province because it is linguistically Bengali. Apart from this linguistic principle, the Congress policy is one of self-determination and so the ultimate decision should largely rest with the people concerned. I take it that the Sylhet people would welcome amalgamation with Bengal. This is desirable from the economic point of view also, as Sylhet being a permanently settled area fits in with the economy of Bengal far more than that of Assam which has peasant proprietorship. It might be desirable for the Sylhet representatives in the assembly to take the initiative in the matter. I do not think, however, that any change is likely to take place in the near future. I want your committee and the Assam people to realise that we have far bigger problems ahead and big changes are coming in the course of the next few years, and not to bother much about other matters which will inevitably be taken in hand as soon as we have greater power.

The immigration question is a complicated one and it has become a communal question which will make it more difficult of solution. Every effort should be made to avoid giving prominence to the communal aspect of it. Essentially it is an economic question and it should be tackled in an economic way. The desire of the Assamese not to be overwhelmed by the non-Assamese people and to preserve their language and culture is perfectly legitimate. But it must be recognised that a sparsely populated area with vacant lands, like Assam is at present, cannot continue as it is, with overcrowded provinces surrounding it. Therefore, immigration is bound to take place because of the economic urge for it. No amount of sentiment and not even laws will ultimately stop it. Indeed, even from the point of view of developing Assam and making it a wealthier province, immigration is desirable. The real problem is how to control and organise this immigration. To talk in terms of stopping it is to ignore realities. To talk in terms of allowing it a free play is also to ignore certain realities and at the same time to lay the basis for future problems which will be difficult of solution. The land problem in India is our major problem and we have to change our land system very greatly in the near future. In Assam, fortunately, there are vacant lands which give us scope for the development of a planned economy in that area at least. To allow this to be developed in a haphazard way by odd immigrants would be folly as this would simply create new problems and burdens for the future.

Personally, I think that the state should try the experiment of organised and planned agriculture there in the shape of large state farms or collective farms or collective farms under state supervision. I do not know if the present state has the wisdom or the capacity to think or act on these lines. In any event, some planning and organisation are necessary, and an expert committee ought to enquire into the possibilities of it.

Even if holdings are given to individuals, this should be subject to various restrictions. First of all, the holding should not be too small or too big. Too small a holding would be uneconomic. Too big would encourage wrong tendencies. A proper-size holding should be calculated to be sufficient for a family. These lands should also not be subject to alienation by way of mortgage or sale, because if alienation is allowed, the land may go to the money-lenders and the like and big estates will grow up.

In allotting lands the first preference should inevitably be for the people born in Assam. The landless people of Assam as well as the agricultural people who have not enough land to support themselves, or who have unemployed sons in the family, should be allotted fresh land in

these new areas. Only after such allotments have taken place should immigrants from outside be admitted to these areas.

I have made the above suggestions without any deep study of the problem. I have no doubt that many other useful suggestions could be made. All these should be considered dispassionately from the economic point of view by experts and others. I do feel that the present line system is essentially bad because it creates, or is likely to create, two sharply divided areas hostile to each other. This will mean that Assam will have a terrible problem to face in future. If, as is said, the new immigrants have been sometimes criminally inclined, this will mean the preservation and encouragement of those criminal tendencies. It is well known to sociologists and criminologists that it is dangerous to have colonies of people who might have such tendencies because they grow under such conditions, and there is no assimilation with the other elements in the population. Immigrants should always be assimilated, otherwise they become foreign bodies always giving trouble. Therefore, the present line system is certainly undesirable. At the same time to abolish it and to leave the door open to the unrestricted immigrants without any safeguards would also be undesirable.

One other matter. I am told that the companies owning tea gardens pay a ridiculously low rental to the state, far less than the agriculturists.[3] Further, that by showing most of their processes as the agricultural process, they escape much of their income-tax which they might otherwise pay. I do not know much about this but it seems to me a very unfair arrangement and I see no reason why the state should suffer. This matter ought to be investigated and agitated both in the assembly and outside.

I do not know what kind of royalty or other charge is paid by the Assam Oil Company to the state. This also requires investigation and, if necessary, some kind of action. These oil companies are often lightly taxed although they make huge profits.[4]

3. For a long time the income from tea gardens was exempt from income-tax as it was deemed to be agricultural income. Under the Act of 1935 also the Government of India decided to treat sixty per cent of the profits from the growth, manufacture and sale of tea as agricultural income. In 1939, the Assam Government decided despite great opposition to levy a tax on agricultural income.

4. The Assam Oil Company was started in 1899 and became a subsidiary of Burma Oil Company in 1921. All oil products were sold in India at very high prices since the entire fuel trade was in the hands of the oil trusts.

I have written to you a long letter giving my impressions about various matters. I should like you to place this letter before your provincial Congress committee at their next meeting. I am sending a copy of this letter to Shri Gopinath Bardoloi, leader of the Congress Party in the Assam Assembly, and I hope he will place it before his party for their consideration.

In conclusion, may I express my gratitude to you and to all your colleagues for the welcome that you have accorded to me here in Assam and for the great trouble you have taken over my visit? This visit is not over yet but already I have been charmed by your province and I am quite sure that it has great potentialities for future progress. I hope the Congress organisation will rapidly become strong and efficient so that it can give a good push in the direction of such progress.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. The Necessity of Swaraj[1]

I am grateful to you for the addresses you have presented to me and the generous terms in which you have referred to my qualities. I feel overwhelmed because though the affection bestowed on me is to my liking, the tremendous expectation behind it makes me feel rather small; and while I say this I utter a friendly warning not to expect many things from an individual, however great he may be.

A leader, of course, is required in so far as he points the path, but a leader isolated from the masses is only too weak. At most, the activities of the people find coordination and expression in a leader, and therefore I say that when you praise a leader or blame him you should rather praise or blame those millions of people who made him as such.

Do not give yourselves away to petty issues for this will divert you and you will lose the proper perspective. Be it culture, literature or anything else, none of these can be nurtured with the help of a few leaders at the top. But if your efforts are fortified at the bottom, you can hope to build a reservoir of strength which would be a source of real power to you. Then alone you will grow big and act big.

1. Speech at Tezpur, 1 December 1937. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 3 December 1937.

An entire change in the present system of administration is required to effect improvement in the conditions of the masses. The new Government of India Act has, of course, conferred some power but the administrative machinery remains the same with the result that though there are now Indians placed in high positions in the administration, the miseries of the people and their problems of poverty and unemployment have not ceased to exist.

The entire policy of the British Government is guided and controlled by a group of capitalists in England in spite of the presence of the king in their constitution; and the same policy is being worked out in the British administration in India for the benefit of a handful of European business magnates in this country. The provisions of the new Government of India Act amply testify this. The Act definitely provides for various safeguards for British trade in India. It requires only common intelligence to realise that if we are to improve the condition of the masses we will have to bring under the control of the natives of India—Hindus and Muslims, men and women—the trade and commerce of the land; and this would necessarily mean some curtailment of the British interests which have already been well safeguarded against any onslaught from the Indians.

It is obvious therefore that so long as the capitalist control of the administrative machinery is not removed, a mere change of personnel at the top would not give the colouring of Swaraj for which the Congress is fighting or remove the various ills of the masses for whose welfare the Congress has committed itself.

Therefore I would urge upon you all to join the Congress and strengthen the organisation for your own benefit and the benefit of the country as a whole.

5. On the Threshold of Swaraj[1]

You see wars going on and also the preparations for greater wars. Be that as it may, it would require a great nerve and energy to have our way and that is possible only through the organisation of the Congress. Therefore, I ask you to build up this organisation still further so that it may become absolutely representative of the millions in the villages.

1. Speech at Silchar, 6 December 1937. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 7 December 1937.

It is discipline and organisation that help when the hour comes. Enthusiasm is good but it is not good if there be no clear thinking behind it. I am much more interested in appealing to your mind for I don't want blind followers.

The address you have presented to me is a bit embarrassing as it seems you expect magic things from me. I am afraid there is nothing as magic in this world, otherwise Swaraj would have been attained long ago. But the fact is that we have to try hard and work for the fulfilment of our ideal in view. Therefore I say that I feel depressed when you speak in your addresses in extravagant language, for it seems that you expect too much from an individual. It may be right to show affection for an individual but in India it is dangerous to exalt an individual too much. We have had too long a list of people sitting not only in exalted positions but on the shoulders of humanity. We want now the forgotten and downtrodden men to come up in their turn.

I happen to be the representative of a big organisation and I have to carry its message which has become so dear that the people flock to me to hear it. The whole of India is so hungry and thirsty for a change that people come to me in the hope that I may have some message to lift them out of the depth of poverty and misery into which they have fallen. But our difficulty is that we have not as yet even launched on the proper path, for our hands are tied. Real work will begin only when we have attained Swaraj.

The huge crowd that assembles to greet me everywhere has another lesson for us and it is the tremendous sense of unity of India. This is a historical fact and anyone who does not know this knows little of India's past or present. In spite of political deviations and differences there has been a cultural unity of India. Later on, of course, the noose of common slavery tightened round us and this ultimately manifested itself in a common struggle for freedom. And all of us realise it now that we are engaged in this common endeavour.

This whole Congress movement has been one of strengthening the Indian people. We have weakened considerably the power of British imperialism, a power feared and respected by great nations. And it must also be recognised that our peasantry have stood up against this mighty power. But the real thing the Congress has done is to build up a nation which had become denationalised through long years of foreign domination; and the Congress has succeeded to a great extent in this regard too. We are now on the threshold of Swaraj, not that we have got it, owing to Congress ministries being formed in several provinces. I tell you, and I speak with the most intimate knowledge of things, that our villagers have now quite changed. If we have a

movement now, it would be a great one and it would be difficult for any power to check it.

What really is important today is not the local problems but the problems of India. I, therefore, urge you to think in terms of India and to some extent in terms of the world.

6. In the Valley of the Brahmaputra[1]

Eight days are an all too brief period for the Assam valley, and yet this was all I gave to it, and then I sped away to another beautiful valley. During these eight days I visited many towns and villages and had a glimpse of the rich variety of this province and of the hospitable people who inhabit it. I loved the uncommon combination of semi-tropical scenery and snow-topped mountains with a noble river running between them. Everywhere I had the warmest of welcomes, and I am deeply grateful to all classes and peoples for their exceeding courtesy. That courtesy was extended to me by Europeans and Indians alike, and even the railway authorities gave every facility for my travelling. But above all I rejoiced to experience the love and goodwill of the masses who came in such large numbers to meet me and hear me. Throughout my tour I was enveloped and stimulated by the abundance of this affection, and I shall remember it with joy and gratitude. I shall carry away with me also, imprinted on my mind, the silent beauty of the dawn as we sailed over the bosom of the Brahmaputra and the snow-covered peaks in the distance caught the first rays of the rising sun.

Many places I visited and saw, but there was one notable exception. I am sorry I could not go to Shillong. I am sorry also that I could not visit the tribal areas. I met, however, many of the members of these tribes—Khasis, Kacharis, Ravas, Garos, Lalungs, Mikirs, Miris, and Nagas —and was attracted by them and by the bright faces of their children. They deserve every help and sympathy from Congressmen, and I hope they will receive it.

Rush tours like mine involve a great deal of organizing and give much trouble to those in charge of them. This burden fell naturally on my comrades of the Congress, and I must express my deep gratitude to them

1. Written in a running train on 9 December, 1937. *The Tribune*, 14 December 1937. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 189-199.

for all they did. The Congress is a living vital force in Assam, as I saw and felt everywhere I went during these eight days, but the organizational side has been somewhat neglected, and so the province has not pulled its full weight in the past. I hope and believe that this deficiency will be made good now and the great enthusiasm of the people will be organized and disciplined to right ends.

I came up against particular problems affecting Assam and exercising the minds of the people of the province, and yet all these were secondary before the major problem of India—the poverty of the people—and this was terribly in evidence in the province. It is this problem of poverty and that of Swaraj and national freedom that overshadow all local problems and we must always remember this if we are to retain a proper perspective and work effectively. In a sense Assam is fortunate; for the very fact that it has been somewhat neglected and its development has been slow opens out promising vistas of rapid development on a planned basis, greater production of wealth and a rising standard of living for her people. Elsewhere in India I have seldom had this sense of latent power and resources which the jungles and unoccupied spaces of Assam have given me. The place cries aloud for the mind and the hand of man to develop it, but this can only be for the public good if it is organized and planned and deliberately aims at the betterment of the masses.

Among the various local problems that the people of Assam think about there are: opium, the future of Sylhet, immigration and the line system, the tea gardens, and more especially the labour employed there, and the excluded and partially excluded areas with the various tribal folk inhabiting them. Then there is that precious commodity, oil, more valuable in the modern world than gold.

The opium question of Assam has for long years excited the attention of all India and even of other parts of the world. The government, while expressing appreciation of public sentiment, has resisted it also in its desire to cling on to the opium revenue. Yet it is true that the opium consumption has gone down considerably and with it the revenue. Probably it could have been stamped out almost completely if the government had pursued a more rigorous policy during the past dozen years or more. There is a tendency now, I was told, to issue licences for opium in increasing numbers to almost everyone who applies for them and the age limit of fifty is seldom enforced. The time has certainly come when a more vigorous and effective policy should be pursued and the issue of licences should be a rarity and only for definite medical reasons. It should be possible to reduce opium consumption almost to vanishing point within two or three years. There is a danger of opium smuggling increasing, but I think this is magnified and can be checked. There is

probably more smuggling going on now *via* the Indian states in Rajputana and central India than across the border. But this smuggling is still small compared to the authorized sale of opium.

There seems also to be a tendency on the part of the government to increase its liquor revenue to replace its diminishing income from opium. This must be checked or else one evil will give place to another.

The future of the Surma valley is a living question in Assam and the Assamese are keenly desirous that Sylhet should be transferred to the administrative province of Bengal, so as to leave them an area which is linguistically more homogeneous. The people of Sylhet, I found, were equally in favour of this change and, on the face of it, the desire is reasonable. Sylhet is not only linguistically Bengali, but its economy is more allied to that of Bengal than of Assam proper. There is the permanent settlement there, as in Bengal, while in Assam peasant proprietors, with a varying assessment, are usually to be found.

The Congress has all along laid stress on a linguistic division of provinces. This corresponds with cultural areas, and it is far easier for the people of such an area to develop educationally and otherwise on the basis of their mother tongue. Indeed, the Surma valley has long formed part of the Congress province of Bengal. Thus it is clear that, so far as the Congress is concerned, there is no doubt as to what the future of Sylhet should be—it should go to Bengal. I feel, however, that we have to face today far more important and vital problems, and the next few years are pregnant with the possibilities of vast changes. Therefore, we should not spend our energy too much on trying to bring about the small changes, which, however desirable, do not affect the main issue. We should certainly press for these relatively minor changes, but always looking at them in the proper perspective and not losing ourselves in them. When the big changes come, as come they must, the other will follow rapidly.

Immigration and the line system is a far more vital problem of Assam. I hesitate to give a detailed opinion on this issue as it requires expert knowledge which I do not claim to possess. Pre-eminently it is a question to be considered by experts, economists and others. And yet there are some considerations which seem to me to govern this question. It is right that the basic consideration should be the development of Assam and the betterment of the people of Assam. But Assam cannot be isolated from the rest of India, nor can any artificial barriers be put between them. Even laws cannot for long override economic factors. Assam is partly an undeveloped province with a relatively sparse population, while on two sides of it are thickly populated areas with land-hungry masses. It is true that large parts of Assam are mountainous country and some

other parts are liable to periodic floods. Still there is plenty of room for development and at present there is a want of equilibrium between Assam and the surrounding provinces, and this will always result in economic forces seeking to restore an equilibrium. These realities or these forces cannot be ignored, but if they are properly understood and directed to right ends, we can ultimately produce an equilibrium which is for the benefit and advancement of the people of Assam.

It seems to me that throwing the unoccupied land open to unrestricted immigration without any planning or recognized end in view will be peculiarly unfortunate. We have a sufficiency and more of difficult land problems in India, indeed they are the major problems of the country, and it would be folly to add to them in Assam. Assam is fortunate in being in a position to carry out large schemes of land reform without coming up against vested interests which are difficult to dislodge. For a government to create fresh vested interests is to add to its own difficulties and tie its own hands and feet as well as to encumber the next generation.

It is generally believed now that land reform should move in the direction of large collective farms or state farms. The Assam Government has a fine opportunity to work to this end. Instead of just allowing odd people to get parcels of land and to cultivate them as they will in an individualistic way, it should start large state farms and try to develop collectives. Assam-born people should be given preference in these, but immigrants should certainly be accepted. The capital for these undertakings should be raised, if necessary, by loan. It will be a profitable investment. Such state farms and collectives should work out a planned scheme of land reform in the whole province and begin by giving effect to it in their own areas. With success in these areas, the scheme can easily be extended to other parts of the province.

I do not know if the present Government of Assam has vision enough and can think or act in these terms. Probably not. In any event, nothing should be done which might come in the way of such development in the future. If land is to be allotted to individuals it should be given on specific conditions, such as no right of sale or mortgage and the state to have the right to organize collectives when it so desires. To give the right of sale or mortgage will result in the building up of large estates. This, as well as speculation in land, has to be avoided. The parcel of land allotted should not be too small to be uneconomic for a family and not too large to convert the holder into a landlord subsisting on the labour of others. The size can be fixed after local enquiry. In allotting land, preference should be given to Assam-born people and promising immigrants should then be welcomed.

The present line system seems to me obviously a transitional affair which cannot continue as such for long. To remove it suddenly and leave the field open to unrestricted immigration would result in producing all manner of entanglements and future problems. To keep it as it is seems to me undesirable. The principle is bad and we cannot encourage it in India. It is also bad to confine immigrants in a particular area and so prevent them from being assimilated by the people of the province. This results in increasing separatism and hostility between adjoining areas, and a terribly difficult problem is created for future generations. The very basis of immigration must be the assimilation of the immigrant. If he remains an alien and an outsider, he is a disrupting force in the body politic. From a sociological point of view it is admitted now that it is dangerous even to keep colonies of criminals apart, as they deteriorate when they are removed from the healthy influences of normal social life. They concentrate on their criminality.

The Assamese, however, fear that, instead of assimilating the immigrants, they might be assimilated by them, as they come in such vast numbers. Some comments in the last Census Report, where the immigrants from eastern Bengal are compared to a "mass movement of a large body of ants", have produced a powerful impression on the mind of the Assamese, and they fear a suppression and almost an extinction of their culture, language, and individuality. Though there is some reason for this apprehension, I think it is exaggerated. Culture and individuality in a people do not depend entirely on numbers, but on something more vital. Even small minorities, enveloped by alien and hostile peoples, have retained their culture, language, and individuality, and even intensified them. If the Assamese have this vital element in them, as I believe they have, they will not be affected much by large bodies of immigrants coming in. They will influence the latter far more than they will be influenced by them, especially as the immigrants are likely to be of a lower cultural level.

But still, as I have said, it would be undesirable to have unchecked immigration without a plan or system. Under a planned development the possible dangers will be avoided and the wealth of Assam will grow and the Assamese people will prosper, while at the same time affording scope for immigrants to come in and so gradually to establish an equilibrium between Assam and the adjoining provinces.

The tea gardens cover a good part of Assam, and the province might indeed be called the land of tea. I passed by innumerable such gardens, especially in upper Assam, and they had a prosperous look about them. A tea garden can be judged to some extent from its external appearance, and I must say that most of these gardens in the upper valley looked

clean and efficient, more so than the gardens I had seen some years ago in Ceylon. The bushes were neat and close together, and their surfaces formed an unbroken and uniform expanse.

But the shine of the shoe is not the test of its fit or the comfort it gives to the wearer. I suppose the garden labourers are not looked upon as the wearers of the shoe in question. But I was more interested in them than in the quality of the tea produced or the dividends of the companies. And the look of these labourers, men and women, was not good and their complaints were many. Some progress has been made, in law at least, from the days when these workers were indentured coolies and practically in bondage. But, in effect, I doubt if the change has made material difference to their lives. They had a hunted look about them, and fear peeped out of their eyes. They were poor, of course.

They have no organization and are not allowed to have any. I am told that outsiders are not encouraged to go to them or to their lines, and they live more or less secluded lives. They have been given special representation in the provincial assembly, but the measure of their helplessness is this, that their so-called representatives represent the interests of their employers and always side with them. They dare not elect the people of their choice. This is a deplorable state of affairs, and to remedy this utter helplessness is far more important than some paternal legislation to remove minor grievances. The employers themselves should realize that these primitive labour methods cannot continue, and even their own interests require that labour should be made more self-reliant.

I think the immediate need is for a proper enquiry to be carried out into labour conditions, and the provincial assembly might well appoint a committee for this purpose, which should go thoroughly into the matter. I hope the employers will cooperate with such a committee and give it every facility. Facilities for labour organizations should also be given and, as such organizations grow up, they should be recognized and encouraged.

I might add that, so far as I was concerned, I had some facilities given to me by the tea garden authorities to meet the labourers. The tea planters were courteous to me in this and other matters, and I am grateful to them. Large crowds of workers met me at meetings and by the wayside, but during my rush tour I had no time to go deeply into their problems.

I was surprised to learn that the tea companies paid exceedingly little in the way of revenues to the state for the land occupied by them. They pay far less than the ordinary agriculturist. Why this particular favour should be shown to them I do not know. It seems unfair to the state and to the agriculturists.

Vast tracts in Assam are included in the excluded and partially excluded areas.[2] The people living here are cut off from the rest of India, and we know little about them. Curiously enough, the Government of India Act of 1935 has widened the gap and made them still more unapproachable. And yet no people in India require more helpful sympathy and cooperation from their countrymen than these tribal folk and others who live, cut off from us, in these areas. I like these people and feel drawn to them, and I hope the Congress organization and our provincial assemblies will do everything in their power to remove their disabilities and to encourage education and industry among them. Here also investigation is needed. Some of the tribal people I met were obviously intelligent and, given the right education and encouragement, would go ahead.

Apart from the tea plantations and oil, modern industry is hardly in evidence in Assam. At Dhubri there is a match factory belonging to the Swedish Match Trust, and this has gained an unenviable notoriety during the past year because of a lock-out and strike. This strike and lock-out lasted for nearly a year, and this long-drawn-out struggle is itself evidence of the deep feeling of grievance among the workers, who had continued their struggle despite hunger and destitution. Their demands were reasonable. It is bad enough that the workers should be starved into submission anywhere, but it is worse that powerful foreign trusts, trying to cloak themselves under the garb of swadeshi, should thus exploit their workers in India. I think it should be made perfectly clear that the Congress strongly disapproves of this and will try to put an end to it when it has the chance to do so.

There is obviously room for the development of industry in Assam, both cottage and large-scale. Weaving is widespread, and every middle-class girl has a loom. An essential part of her training consists in the practical knowledge of weaving. Efforts to teach cottage industries to Harijans and tribal people have met with success, and these could easily be widely extended with excellent results. I saw an efficient little school and ashram run for this purpose by the All India Harijan Sevak Sangh. The work was limited in scope for lack of funds.

What large-scale industries can be developed in Assam, I am not competent to say. Paper making is evidently one of them, for the forests

2. Where there was an enclave or a definite tract of country inhabited by a compact tribal population it was classified as an excluded area; and where the tribal population was less homogeneous, but was still undeveloped and substantial in number, it was classified as a partially excluded area. On 1 April 1937, the Naga hills district, the north-east frontier tract, the Lushai hills, and the North Cachar hills were declared as excluded areas within the province of Assam.

run wild with bamboos and other plants which are said to be good for the purpose. I was surprised to learn that the tea-planters import their wooden cases for tea from abroad, mostly from Japan, and a vast number of such cases are used. There is a plentiful supply of good wood at their very doorstep, and, with suitable machinery, all the wooden cases required can be produced locally with advantage to the province and to the tea industry.

At Digboi one sees the familiar iron derricks against the skyline, and they announce to the visitor that he is entering an outpost of the great empire of oil. The Assam Oil Company is associated with the Burma Oil Company, and the two together are parts of the Shell combine. This accumulated wealth of past ages is being pumped out at Digboi, but Assam, the owner of this wealth, hardly profits, for the royalties go to the central revenues of India. This is unfair to the people of Assam, and there is an agitation against it which seems to me to be justified. The price of petrol is higher in Assam than in Calcutta or elsewhere. This remarkable example of capitalist economy was in evidence in Burma also. Burmese or Assamese petrol is cheaper in London than in the country which produces it, where the oil is pumped and refined.

And so goodbye to the valley of the Brahmaputra, and across the forests and over the hills to Silchar and Sylhet in the Surma valley.

7. In the Surma Valley[1]

As I journeyed from one valley to another, the railway crept along (for it went very slowly) between thick forests on either side; almost impenetrable, so they seemed. They came right up to the railway line, leaving only a narrow passage grudgingly for us to pass through. Their million eyes seemed to look down with disdain on this human effort, and were full of the hostility of the forest against man, who had dared so much against it, and cleared it to enlarge his domain. Their thousand mouths were agape with the desire to swallow him and his works.

The call of the jungle and the mountain has always been strong within me, a dweller of cities and of plains though I am, and I gazed at these forests and jungles, fascinated, and wondered what myriad forms of life and what tragedy they hid in their darknesses. Bountiful nature, or nature red in tooth and claw—was it much worse in these forest recesses than

1. 9 December 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 21 December 1937. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 184-188.

in the cities and the dwelling-places of men and women? A wild animal kills for food to satisfy his hunger. He does not kill for sport or for the pleasure of killing. The fierce fights of the jungle are individual fights, not the mass murder that man calls war; there is no wholesale destruction by bomb and poison gas. The comparison seemed to be all in favour of the forest and the wild animals.

So I thought as I watched the passing jungles. Gatherings of people at small stations, and many tribal folk with gracious gifts of fruit and flowers and cloth, woven by themselves, and fresh milk came to welcome me. Bright-eyed Naga children gave me garlands to wear. Some of these tribal people pressed some money on me also, copper and nickel coins for Congress work, they said. And I felt ashamed and humbled before their clear gaze, full of faith and affection. What of the cities with their selfishness and intrigues and money-grabbing?

And so to our destination and big crowds and rousing welcomes and *Bande Mataram* shouted vigorously to the skies. A motor journey through the villages with crowds and welcome everywhere, and on to Silchar. The audience at the meeting there seemed to be bigger than what I had been told the population of the city was. Probably many people came from the villages.

For three days I rushed about the valley, chiefly in the Sylhet district. As in the Assam valley, the roads were generally bad and a prodigious number of ferries had to be crossed. But the charm and beauty of the passing scenery held me and made me forget the roads, and the warmth of the welcome from all manner of people sent a glow to my heart.

Sylhet was definitely Bengal. The language proclaimed it, so also the zamindari tenants who came, and of whom a large number were Muslims. And yet it had much in common with the valley of the Brahmaputra; tea gardens with their unhappy and helpless-looking labourers, excluded areas with tribal people. It was Bengal, but it seemed to possess a definite individuality of its own, hard to define, but something that was in the air.

I was gratified by the enthusiasm for the Congress which the masses showed, an enthusiasm shared by the Muslims as well as the Hindus, and even by the tribal people. Obviously good work had been done there in the past and the harvest was promising. It was pleasing also to find earnest workers in all parts of the district. Sylhet has a good number of them and the human material they deal with is also good. Much, therefore, can be expected of Sylhet. Unfortunately, some local disputes have marred the good work, but these cannot be allowed to continue. The cause is greater than the individual, and the worker who

does not realize this has failed to learn the first lesson of a Congressman. But I have confidence in Sylhet, in its people, and in its Congress workers, earnest and keen as they are and with a record of sacrifice for the cause behind them. And so, as I was leaving Sylhet and was asked for a message, I said, "Go ahead, Sylhet!"

In the Bhanubil area of Sylhet I came across a large number of Manipuris. Hundreds of charkhas, with Manipuri women and girls plying the wheel, sat there in ordered array to welcome me, and their menfolk and charming children stood by. I was surprised and pleased to see these Manipuris and delighted to learn of the brave part they had taken in the civil disobedience movement. They had also had an economic no-tax movement of their own some years ago, when an attempt was made to enhance their rents.

Here were entirely new people, new to me, and so different from all others I had seen in India. How little we know of our own country and her children! Their features were Mongoloid, they resembled somewhat the Burmese. Indeed, the resemblances to the Burmese were many, and included the dress of their womenfolk. They were extraordinarily neat and clean-looking, and the young girls, with the laughter lurking in their eyes, had quite a smart modern look. The children were charming, with their hair over their foreheads cut short and arranged neatly in front. These fascinating people were peasant folk with little or no education, good spinners and weavers, taking pride in themselves. They were all Vaishnavas by religion, but even here some Burmese customs had crept in and, as I was told, their marriages could be dissolved.

In the hills between the two valleys there lies the state of Manipur, which is the centre of these people, and from there this Bhanubil branch had migrated some generations back. When did the original stock come from Burma or elsewhere, I wondered. They were called backward, I suppose, and yet with education and opportunity, what could not be done with this attractive and intelligent-looking people?

In Sylhet I came across many Muslim fishermen, who complained to me that they were treated as social outcastes and as a kind of depressed class by their own co-religionists.

In Sylhet also many Nagas from the surrounding hills came to visit me with greetings and gifts. And from them and others I heard a story which India ought to know and to cherish. It was the story of a young woman of their tribe belonging to the Kabui clan in the Naga hills. She was of the priestly class and she had the unique opportunity among her people to receive some education in a mission school,

where she reached the ninth or tenth class. Gaidilieu[2] was her name and she was about nineteen, six years ago, when civil disobedience blazed over the length and breadth of India. News of Gandhi and the Congress reached her in her hill abode and found an echo in her heart. She dreamed of freedom for her people and an ending of the galling restrictions they suffered from, and she raised the banner of independence and called her people to rally round it. Perhaps she thought, rather prematurely, that the British Empire was fading out. But that empire still functioned effectively and aggressively and it took vengeance on her and her people. Many villages were burnt and destroyed and this heroic girl was captured and sentenced to transportation for life. And now she lies in some prison in Assam, wasting her bright young womanhood in dark cells and solitude. Six years she has been there. What torment and suppression of spirit they have brought to her, who in the pride of her youth dared to challenge an empire! She can roam no more in the hill country through the forest glades, or sing in the fresh crisp air of the mountains. This wild young thing sits cabined in darkness, with a few yards, may be, of space in the daytime, eating her fiery heart out in desolation and confinement. And India does not even know of this brave child of her hills, with the free spirit of the mountains in her. But her own people remember their Gaidilieu Rani and think of her with love and pride. And a day will come when India also will remember her and cherish her, and bring her out of her prison cell.

But our so-called provincial autonomy will not help in bringing about this release. More is needed. For the excluded areas are outside the ken of our provincial ministries, and, strange to say, they are even more cut off from us now than they were before the advent of provincial autonomy. Even questions about Gaidilieu were not allowed to be put in the Assam Assembly. So we progress to Swaraj through the Government of India Act, 1935.

Darkness had set in and my tour was approaching its appointed end. We reached Habibganj late in the evening and, after the meeting there, hurried on to Shaistaganj to catch our train. The crescent moon hung over the horizon, with the silvery brightness gone and looking gloomy and yellow. I thought of the past twelve days with all their quick movement and crowds and enthusiasm, and it all seemed like a dream that was over. And I thought of Gaidilieu, the Rani, sitting in her prison cell. What thoughts were hers, what regrets, what dreams?

2. (b. 1919); joined the Kabui agitation in 1930 for the establishment of an independent Naga rule; arrested in 1932 and sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment; released after independence on Jawaharlal's initiative.

8

THE NATIONAL FLAG

1. The National and the Red Flags[1]

Dear Comrade,

Reference is sometimes made to us about the use of the red flag at Congress meetings. Occasionally unseemly incidents have also taken place in this connection. I have previously expressed myself in public whenever such an incident has taken place but I should like to make the position clear for the guidance of Congressmen.

The red flag has, for a hundred years or more, been the flag of the workers all over the world and nearly all workers' organizations have adopted it in various countries. It represents the struggles and sacrifices of the workers as well as the conception of the unity of the workers all over the world. As such it is entitled to our respect, and a workers' organization, if it so chooses, has every right to display it at its functions.

But so far as the Congress is concerned our flag is the national tricolour. During its short life of half a generation it has already become a symbol to us all, including workers and peasants, of freedom and national unity and solidarity. It represents, as nothing else does, the spirit of the Indian people striving for freedom and the honour of the nation. And because of that so many of our comrades have braved suffering and prison for the sake of that flag. In remote villages we find that flag displayed and the sight of it gives courage and hope to the poor downtrodden villager. That flag has become wrapped up in our minds with so much that we value, so much that we hope for, that any discourtesy to that flag hurts us vitally and we resent the insult to the nation's honour. We cannot tolerate any such discourtesy or insult from whomsoever it might come.

For the Congress this is the only flag and on all Congress functions it is this flag which must be displayed. Between it and the red flag or any other flag there can be or should be no rivalry. If workers' organisations join a Congress procession or a Congress meeting, it is open to them to have their own flags or banners. But any such flag must not dominate the scene or seek equality at such functions with the national flag. At

1. Circular letter to provincial Congress committees, 26 April 1937. Home (Political) File No. 4/15/37, National Archives of India.

all Congress functions it is the national flag that must dominate the scene. I trust that these directions will be borne in mind by all and no one will countenance any act which may be construed as lessening the honour and dignity and importance of a flag that has become so dear to us during these many years of struggle and conflict.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. The Honour of the National Flag[1]

Two recent incidents have occurred, in Simla and near Poona, when the national flag was pulled down by some persons. These incidents have, perhaps, no larger significance and were caused by the folly of individuals. But, nevertheless, they were viewed with pain and resentment. For our flag is dear to us and has become a symbol of our freedom and the nation's honour.

It should be clearly understood that we can and will tolerate nothing that tends to dishonour the national flag.

The way to react to these incidents is to use this flag all the more and I am glad that the people of Simla did so.

In particular, I would suggest that all Congress organizations should revert to our old practice to have the national flag unfurling ceremony regularly on the morning of the last Sunday every month.

Reports of these ceremonies should be sent to the office of the All India Congress Committee.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 25 June 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 26 June 1937.

3. To G. Satyanarayana[1]

Allahabad
August 31, 1937

Dear Comrade,[2]
I am sorry for the delay in answering your letter[3] of the 5th August. For most of this time I was away from Allahabad. I have read this letter and the correspondence you have sent me with some astonishment. For a conflict to arise on such an issue is highly undesirable. It is obviously not possible in such matters to lay down hard and fast rules. Much has to depend on the good sense of our workers and of the people concerned.

In regard to the red flag, I have stated the Congress position as clearly as I could. The Congress, as such, has nothing to do with the red flag. We can only recognise one flag, that is the national flag, which is the emblem of Indian freedom and independence. Any person who tries to lessen the significance of the national flag in the eyes of the public, does injury to our cause. You know that this flag question is an important question between us and the British Government. It is necessary, therefore, to lay the greatest stress on the national flag.

The red flag has a certain definite significance connected with labour and international socialism. Many of us appreciate that and respect the flag. But any attempt to push the red flag in India inevitably, to some extent, conflicts with the national flag, especially in purely Congress functions. This is the background of our policy. Also, it must be remembered that in rural areas we cannot have a confusion of flags. The peasants get puzzled. They have already got used to our national flag and we should spread this among them as much as we can.

At the same time, if special organisations bring their flags in a public procession, ordinarily they should be given freedom to do so. But they must take a subordinate place in a procession. The difficulty comes in when some people insist on taking out the red flag in a particular way in a Congress procession; they do something which they have no right to.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-73/1937, pp. 3-5, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1911); a Congressman of West Godavari district; organised Congress Socialist Party in the district, 1937-39; later joined Communist Party; member, Tamil Nadu Assembly, 1952-57.
3. He had written that, as the Ellore Town Congress Committee had not allowed some associations to observe the Tilak Day and the Congress ministry formation day on 1 August 1937 with red flags, two separate meetings had been held by Congressmen on that day.

At the same time to veto the use of any other flags always, in Congress gatherings and processions, is also an excessive use of authority and leads to friction. The real question that faces us is what flag has got to be pushed by us with all our strength in India today. The answer is that it is the national flag.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. To Chandra Badan Shukla[1]

Allahabad
September 27, 1937

Dear Comrade,
I have received your letter of the 20th. I have been out of Allahabad, hence the delay in answering. I am glad that you have written to me and placed many further facts before me regarding the incidents in Ahmedabad on the day of my arrival.[2] I did not think then that any personal affront to me was intended by anybody, but I did think that a deliberate attempt was made to push aside the national flag by those who were bearing the red flag. I also thought that in the attempt to do so, the carefully made arrangements for the procession were upset by surging crowds. I gave expression, therefore, to my views on this subject because I felt that such behaviour would lead to resentment against the red flag and its supporters. I have seen this resentment growing up in many parts of India and I have noticed it with great regret though I think that the red flag, as the flag of the workers and of international socialism, should find a growing place in Indian public life. Inevitably, the national flag is and must remain the dominant flag in India because it represents the struggle for independence which is the primary issue before us. It is the national flag that opposes the Union Jack in India and all that the Union Jack represents in the way of imperialism. Therefore anything that lessens the value of the national flag is injurious to

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-10(i)/1937, pp. 55-57, N.M.M.L.
2. At the Ahmedabad station on 16 September 1937, Jawaharlal was reported to have been surrounded by a group of people who waved red flags in front of him and upset the arrangements for welcoming him. C.B. Shukla, one of the organizers of the procession of workers carrying red flags, explained to Jawaharlal that they had gathered to welcome him and not to create trouble as suggested by the press.

the larger cause. Indirectly it helps the Union Jack. It is obvious that the red flag cannot take the place of the Union Jack in India but the national flag can and will do so. At the same time the red flag has an important place from the workers' point of view and from the point of view of our international contacts with workers and socialism. I do not think there is any reason why it should come into conflict with the national flag. Unfortunately many incidents have happened in recent months when attempts have been made by over-zealous supporters of the red flag to push it into prominence so as to overshadow or even oust the national flag at a number of places. This has given rise to resentment because the national flag has come to mean a great deal to a large number of people in this country. My fear is that if such unfortunate incidents continue, the red flag will become very unpopular in India and there will be a reaction against it, and it may be that it will bring about conflicts which are wholly unnecessary and undesirable. I do not want this to happen and I want people to realise the consequences of their acts in the larger sphere. People think too much of their local problems and conflicts. I have inevitably to think more from an all-India point of view. That is why I have taken the trouble to write repeatedly in the press on the subject.

I feel however that in our rural areas the red flag has no background and is likely to create confusion only. For the last seventeen or eighteen years we have been trying to educate the peasantry into understanding the national flag and they have got to know it at last. It has become a source of strength to them and one finds it in most villages. To produce confusion in their minds about this flag is to undo the work of these eighteen years. To illustrate this confusion I gave the instance of a kisan's reaction to it on one occasion. This was not meant, obviously, to ridicule the red flag but to point out how others may ridicule it or misunderstand it.

Regarding the incident at Ahmedabad, I am sorry that any words of mine should have been torn out of their context and used in a sense not intended by me. I am sorry also that any workers or others who had come to greet me should feel that I had treated them harshly. That surely could not be my intention.

I have explained above, as I have done previously, my attitude to the red flag and to the national flag. Whenever occasion arises I shall explain still further because I want to remove all conflicts between the

3. Referring to the incident near the railway station on his arrival there on 16 September, Jawaharlal had said that he was pained at the sight of the people trying to thrust the red flag in his face. He had warned them that such rudeness would be ruinous to their cause.

two, so that the red flag may find a proper place in India to represent the great causes which are associated with it.

I do not think it is necessary for me to issue press statements about what happened in Ahmedabad. To do so I would have to find out from the various newspapers what has been said and this is a troublesome undertaking. But if you consider it necessary, you can give publicity to this letter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

5. To Hari Prasad Desai[1]

Allahabad
October 1, 1937

Dear Comrade,[2]
I have just received your letter. I am sorry to learn that the red flag incident at Ahmedabad and what I said about it have been misinterpreted. I thought I had made the position quite clear. There was no question of my insulting the red flag as I respect it and I do not want anyone to insult it. It is an international symbol of great significance and has behind it the love and respect of vast numbers of people in the world. It represents the solidarity of the working class and the hope of international socialism. As a socialist I must respect the red flag. It is indeed owing to my desire to avoid conflicts between the red flag and the national flag that I have repeatedly made statements on this question. In India today the dominant flag in our struggle for independence must necessarily be the national flag which represents it. Anyone who lessens the significance of this does a disservice to the cause of independence. The sentiment for the national flag is rightly deep and widespread and any opposition to it leads to resentment which is likely to lessen the respect for the red flag and bring about hostility between them which will ultimately injure the red flag. This fact must be borne in mind. It is because of this that I have deprecated all aggressive uses of the red flag. At the same time I think it is undesirable for any person to run down the red flag, or to show any disrespect to it.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-9/1937-38, p. 21, N.M.M.L.
2. Secretary, Mill Kamdar Union, Ahmedabad; he had written that some Congressmen and workers in Gujarat were using Jawaharlal's remarks about the red flag to deride left forces and condemn their flag.

I have already written on this subject to others who enquired from me. I do not think that there is any point of my issuing a press statement as I have not come across many press comments. But it is open to you to give publicity to my letter if you so desire it.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

6. To Press Kamgar Union, Bombay[1]

Allahabad
October 1, 1937

Dear Comrade,
I have your letter of the 23rd September conveying to me a resolution[2] of your managing committee. That resolution must have been based on incomplete reports of what I said or did. Numerous incidents have come to my notice of conflicts between the red flag and the national flag. I have tried my best to avoid these conflicts because I have felt that if they continue, the red flag will be disliked and objected to by large numbers of our countrymen who honour the national flag. I have therefore laid stress that a display of the red flag in a spirit of hostility to the national flag must be avoided. I have always stated that the red flag is entitled to respect as the symbol of the workers and of international socialism. It would be unfortunate if this symbol was brought into disrepute in India by needless aggressiveness and hostility on the part of its supporters.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-9/1937-38, p. 17, N.M.M.L.
2. They had deplored Jawaharlal's reaction to the red flag at Ahmedabad station as "an insult to the flag of the workers of the world."

7. To B.N. Prasad[1]

Allahabad
November 10, 1937

Dear Dr. Prasad,[2]
I have just received your letter which, as you say, you have written at the instance of the higher authorities of the university. I am glad you have made the position clear.

I was asked some weeks back by the students of the Sir P.C. Banerji hostel to hoist the national flag on their hostel building. Previously I had taken part in this ceremony in the Holland Hall and the Kayastha Pathshala hostel at the invitation of both, the authorities and the students there. I was not aware at the time, or till today, of the fine distinction between recognised hostels and hostels which are university buildings. I made that clear to the students who approached me and they assured me on the point. Even so I wanted them to excuse me as I had no time to spare and I did not see the point of my going to every hostel for the flag-hoisting ceremony. Since then they have come to me repeatedly and at last I agreed to go, fixing Nov. 12th at 5 p.m. for the purpose. Before I did so I enquired again if the authorities had been approached and I was assured that they had been informed and were agreeable.

In view of what you have written now it is obvious that I cannot go to the hostel for this or any other like purpose. It would be improper for me to go there or anywhere by the backdoor, as it were, and with the disapproval of those in authority. Will you kindly inform the students of your hostel of this so that they might put an end to the arrangements that were being made?

I should like to add that the resolution of the executive council of the university,[3] to which you have drawn my attention, seems to me a very unhappy one. The executive council seems to be oblivious of what is happening in India, what changes have taken place, what millions of our countrymen feel and passionately desire to achieve, what even the students under their charge are or seek to be. The council appears to think and live in a narrow space bounded by the government and the

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-9/1937-38, pp. 39-40, N.M.M.L.
2. An eminent mathematician; at that time superintendent, P.C. Banerji hostel, University of Allahabad.
3. The resolution passed on 22 October 1937 read: "...as the form of the national flag has not yet been discussed and decided upon by the government and the legislatures, it is not meet and proper for an academic body like the University to associate itself with a flag-hoisting ceremony."

legislatures, and even so it does not realise that the government itself has changed.

So far as I am concerned, I have made it clear that we want to avoid any kind of a conflict over the flag. We want it to be accepted and honoured willingly by all. We do not want to create a situation which might be embarrassing to the university authorities. But we do expect every Indian to show courtesy to the flag and I must say that the attitude of the university executive council comes perilously near to showing it discourtesy.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

8. The National Flag[1]

I see this flag in your hands. It is spreading in all villages and homes. It has been in our country for some years. But there are many things behind it.

What does the flag indicate?

It consists of three colours. It represents our vast country from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, as also all castes and communities in India who call themselves Indians and sons of this soil. This tri coloured national flag of ours is the symbol of our unity, independence and sacrifices. So we must take it to every home in India.

It was made in consultation with all the communities. I don't want to differentiate between the various communities represented by the colours. It is the symbol of unity among all communities. It is the flag of our independence. It reminds us of our fight for freedom as also our unity. India is a vast country with so many communities living therein. Until the advent of this flag, twenty years back, we were weak and shattered. When we learnt that strength lay in unity, this flag came to the forefront. Though it is only twenty years old as yet, I want it to reach every home in India. It has given us strength and when we hold it aloft, we feel as one with the millions in the fight for independence. It has given us courage and hope. It has also given us a sense of unity.

1. Speech at the flag-hoisting ceremony at the U.P. Political Conference held at Harduaganj in Aligarh district on 30 December 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 31 December 1937.

The combination of the three colours, saffron, white and green, is a grand one and it makes it probably the most beautiful of all the flags in the world. But we don't revere it for its colours. We cannot tolerate any insult to it. We don't want to show disrespect to other peoples' flags and cannot tolerate disrespect to ours.

All countries of the world have their flags. England also has its own. Let it rise as high as possible in England or anywhere else where they want to take it, but let Britain not hoist it on our country. I have often heard you raising voices "down with the Union Jack" and such things. We should not say so. It is beneath our dignity and honour to do so.

There is one more flag which we see being taken out. It is the red flag. This is the flag of no country, but of the poor, downtrodden and oppressed, all over the world. A lot of blood has been spilled over it, too. So I revere it and we should all respect it, but we cannot carry two flags at the same place and time. That will confuse us. It might even lead to differences among us, so we must keep only our tricoloured national flag. Those who are trying to take this red flag to villages are not doing a proper thing. That diminishes the strength behind the national movement for freedom. No flag other than this national flag can fight against British imperialism. I, therefore, request everybody that this flag alone should be taken to the people. It is a very valuable asset. When I stand under it, my honour increases and I get more strength, but I don't want it to be in the hands or over the heads of those who don't deserve it and won't show it the respect due to it.

There is one more flag which is seen in cities, but has not yet reached the villages. It is the green flag of the Muslim League. As I have said already, we are not to show dishonour or disrespect to anybody's flag. The same applies to this flag. What we should do is to try to increase the popularity of our flag by putting in more service and sacrifice.

This flag of the Muslim League has come to the fore only during the last three or four months. What is its necessity? Why should there be separate flags for Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs? Why all this collection of flags, like those in Prayag, that won't help in our work? If every community has its own separate flag, that will show our disunity and differences, not unity, while the purpose of a flag is to unite.

Our tricolour is the flag of all the communities combined and not of any one community. It is recognized as the flag of the whole nation by all Hindus, Muslims and others. But there are a few Muslims who raise communal cries and want our differences to continue and it is they who have raised a separate flag.

We should also remember that when we take up the national flag, it presupposes that we are not to indulge in any underhand or mean

action. When you take up this flag no such action can be tolerated. Remember, this flag has been the emblem of our nonviolent struggle for independence. We should not think that our fight has ended with the formation of Congress ministries in seven provinces. Our fight is for removing hunger and unemployment of our masses. Some people want us to forget these problems, but we cannot, if we stand united under this flag.

9. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
January 9, 1938

My dear Krishna,
I have read what you say about the independence demonstration. I am afraid it is hardly possible for me to send you a speech for the occasion but I shall send you a message.[2] Probably you have already got the independence pledge which we used first in 1930. This pledge is a very long one and the last paragraph does not apply now as it refers to civil disobedience. We have, therefore, shortened the pledge for this year. The whole of the first paragraph of the original pledge is incorporated and a short second paragraph is added.[3] I shall send this on to you.

About flags, I think you should concentrate on the Congress tricolour flag, as this is the symbol of our independence struggle. It does not matter of course if separate organisations participating in the demonstration bring red flags but so far as we are concerned, at this particular meeting or demonstration, the national flag is most significant. There has been some controversy in India over this question. The general attitude taken up by me has been to avoid any conflict and to stress the national flag. Trade unions often use the red flag and that is right. But in the rural areas the red flag has no significance here, no historical background, and it produces confusion in the peasant's mind. He cannot understand two flags and he has got used to the national flag everywhere. In India today symbolically the conflict is between the national flag and the Union Jack, and anything that confuses this issue lessens the significance of the national flag. I have therefore emphasised that in rural areas the national flag only should be used. It is, in fact, in universal use.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See *post*, section 11, item 21.
3. See p. 400.

Another difficulty has arisen by the attempt made by the Muslim League to push their communal flag. In all these considerations I think we should lay the greatest stress on the national flag. But, as I have said, labour and such like organisations can of course display their own particular flags and standards.

Since I wrote to you last the situation has developed here in the wrong direction and I am greatly distressed at various events that are happening. I am afraid I cannot write to you at length but it is clear that many vital matters will have to be decided at the Haripura Congress. I do not know at all what I shall do after the Congress. My own inclination is not to take up any burden of office or even executive responsibility so far as the top executive of the Congress is concerned. Subhas Bose has to face an extraordinarily difficult situation than any I had to face. I should like to help him of course in every way; but how to do this effectively is the problem.

Unfortunately I shall have no rest before the Congress session. I am going off to the frontier again soon.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

9

"THE RASHTRAPATI"

1. To Padmaja Naidu[1]

Allahabad
5.10.37

Bebee dear,

This morning I returned from Lucknow. As an after-dinner exercise I have written the enclosed essay.[2] Do what you like with it. I have not got it typed here as I did not want to show it to anybody here, including Upadhyaya. I have not sufficient energy or time to type it myself. I would rather you did not tell others that I wrote it for this would take the bloom off. It might be worthwhile to send it for publication somewhere. Why not try *The Modern Review?* But as I have said, do what you like.

I shall soon go off on my perpetual tours. On the 9th I leave Allahabad.

10th	Delhi
11th, 12th, 13th	Punjab, ending up with Lahore
14th, 15th, 16th	Peshawar etc.
18th, 19th	Bijnor etc.
20th	Allahabad
24th	Leave Allahabad
25th	Santiniketan
26-1st Nov.	Calcutta

Then probably Assam and Surma valley for ten days.

Love,

Jawahar

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See the succeeding item.

2. The Rashtrapati[1]
by Chanakya

Rashtrapati Jawaharlal ki Jai.[2] The Rashtrapati looked up as he passed swiftly through the waiting crowds, his hands went up and were joined together in salute, and his pale hard face was lit up by a smile. It was a warm personal smile and the people who saw it responded to it immediately and smiled and cheered in return.

The smile passed away and again the face became stern and sad, impassive in the midst of the emotion that it had roused in the multitude. Almost it seemed that the smile and the gesture accompanying it had little reality behind them; they were just tricks of the trade to gain the goodwill of the crowds whose darling he had become. Was it so?

Watch him again. There is a great procession and tens of thousands of persons surround his car and cheer him in an ecstasy of abandonment. He stands on the seat of the car, balancing himself rather well, straight and seemingly tall, like a god, serene and unmoved by the seething multitude. Suddenly there is that smile again, or even a merry laugh, and the tension seems to break and the crowd laughs with him, not knowing what it is laughing at. He is godlike no longer but a human being claiming kinship and comradeship with the thousands who surround him, and the crowd feels happy and friendly and takes him to its heart. But the smile is gone and the pale stern face is there again.

Is all this natural or the carefully thought-out trickery of the public man? Perhaps it is both and long habit has become second nature now. The most effective pose is one in which there seems to be least of posing, and Jawaharlal has learnt well to act without the paint and powder of the actor. With his seeming carelessness and insouciance, he performs on the public stage with consummate artistry. Whither is this going to lead him and the country? What is he aiming at with all his apparent want of aim? What lies behind that mask of his, what desires, what will to power, what insatiate longings?

1. 5 October 1937. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. Jawaharlal later appended the following note to this article: "This article was written by Jawaharlal Nehru, but it was published anonymously in *The Modern Review* of Calcutta, November 1937. 'Rashtrapati' is a Sanskrit word meaning Head of the State. The title is popularly used for President of the Indian National Congress. Chanakya was a famous Minister of Chandragupta, who built an empire in north India in the fourth century B.C., soon after Alexander's raid on India. Chanakya is the prototype of Machiavelli."
2. Victory to President Jawaharlal.

These questions would be interesting in any event, for Jawaharlal is a personality which compels interest and attention. But they have a vital significance for us, for he is bound up with the present in India, and probably the future, and he has the power in him to do great good to India or great injury. We must therefore seek answers to these questions.

For nearly two years now he has been President of the Congress and some people imagine that he is just a camp-follower in the Working Committee of the Congress, suppressed or kept in check by others. And yet steadily and persistently he goes on increasing his personal prestige and influence both with the masses and with all manner of groups and people. He goes to the peasant and the worker, to the zamindar and the capitalist, to the merchant and the peddler, to the Brahmin and the untouchable, to the Muslim, the Sikh, the Christian and the Jew, to all who make up the great variety of Indian life. To all these he speaks in a slightly different language, ever seeking to win them over to his side. With an energy that is astonishing at his age, he has rushed about across this vast land of India, and everywhere he has received the most extraordinary of popular welcomes. From the far north to Cape Comorin he has gone like some triumphant Caesar passing by, leaving a trail of glory and a legend behind him. Is all this for him just a passing fancy which amuses him, or some deep design, or the play of some force which he himself does not know? Is it his will to power, of which he speaks in his *Autobiography*, that is driving him from crowd to crowd and making him whisper to himself:

> "I drew these tides of men into my hands
> and wrote my will across the sky in stars."

What if the fancy turn? Men like Jawaharlal, with all their capacity for great and good work, are unsafe in democracy. He calls himself a democrat and a socialist, and no doubt he does so in all earnestness, but every psychologist knows that the mind is ultimately a slave to the heart and logic can always be made to fit in with the desires and irrepressible urges of a person. A little twist and Jawaharlal might turn a dictator sweeping aside the paraphernalia of a slow-moving democracy. He might still use the language and slogans of democracy and socialism, but we all know how fascism has fattened on this language and then cast it away as useless lumber.

Jawaharlal is certainly not a fascist, not only by conviction but by temperament. He is far too much of an aristocrat for the crudity and vulgarity of fascism. His very face and voice tell us that:

"Private faces in public places
are better and nicer than
public faces in private places."

The fascist face is a public face and it is not a pleasant face in public or private. Jawaharlal's face as well as his voice are definitely private. There is no mistaking that even in a crowd, and his voice at public meetings is an intimate voice which seems to speak to individuals separately in a matter-of-fact homely way. One wonders as one hears it or sees that sensitive face what lies behind them, what thoughts and desires, what strange complexes and repressions, what passions suppressed and turned to energy, what longings which he dare not acknowledge even to himself. The train of thought holds him in public speech, but at other times his looks betray him, for his mind wanders away to strange fields and fancies, and he forgets for a moment his companion and holds inaudible converse with the creatures of his brain. Does he think of the human contacts he has missed in his life's journey, hard and tempestuous as it has been; does he long for them? Or does he dream of the future of his fashioning and of the conflicts and triumphs that he would fain have? He must know well that there is no resting by the way in the path he has chosen, and even triumph itself means greater burdens. As Lawrence said to the Arabs: "There could be no rest-houses for revolt, no dividend of joy paid out." Joy may not be for him, but something greater than joy may be his, if fate and fortune are kind—the fulfilment of a life purpose.

Jawaharlal cannot become a fascist. And yet he has all the makings of a dictator in him—vast popularity, a strong will directed to a well-defined purpose, energy, pride, organisational capacity, ability, hardness, and, with all his love of the crowd, an intolerance of others and a certain contempt for the weak and the inefficient. His flashes of temper are well known and even when they are controlled, the curling of the lips betrays him. His over-mastering desire to get things done, to sweep away what he dislikes and build anew, will hardly brook for long the slow processes of democracy. He may keep the husk but he will see to it that it bends to his will. In normal times he would be just an efficient and successful executive, but in this revolutionary epoch, Caesarism is always at the door, and is it not possible that Jawaharlal might fancy himself as a Caesar?

Therein lies danger for Jawaharlal and for India. For it is not through Caesarism that India will attain freedom, and though she may prosper a little under a benevolent and efficient despotism, she will remain stunted and the day of the emancipation of her people will be delayed.

For two consecutive years Jawaharlal has been President of the Congress and in some ways he has made himself so indispensable that there are many who suggest that he should be elected for a third term. But a greater disservice to India and even to Jawaharlal can hardly be done. By electing him a third time we shall exalt one man at the cost of the Congress and make the people think in terms of Caesarism. We shall encourage in Jawaharlal the wrong tendencies and increase his conceit and pride. He will become convinced that only he can bear this burden or tackle India's problems. Let us remember that, in spite of his apparent indifference to office, he has managed to hold important offices in the Congress for the last seventeen years. He must imagine that he is indispensable, and no man must be allowed to think so. India cannot afford to have him as President of the Congress for a third year in succession.

There is a personal reason also for this. In spite of his brave talk, Jawaharlal is obviously tired and stale and he will progressively deteriorate if he continues as President. He cannot rest, for he who rides a tiger cannot dismount. But we can at least prevent him from going astray and from mental deterioration under too heavy burdens and responsibilities. We have a right to expect good work from him in the future. Let us not spoil that and spoil him by too much adulation and praise. His conceit is already formidable. It must be checked. We want no Caesars.

3. To Padmaja Naidu[1]

Allahabad
20. 10. 37

My dear, what am I to write to you? How am I to answer your questions? Surely you did not expect me to psycho-analyse myself in an article, written ostensibly by another for publication? And written at the fag end of a tiring day. But your complaint is a deeper one and no doubt justified. But it is justified only because you will imagine me as something other than I am, something nobler perhaps, more mysterious, more complicated. Have I not warned you against that fatal error? We expect too much from people and then are disappointed. Many things are wrong with me, not only my theoretical knowledge of

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

psychology. That theoretical knowledge is itself a vain delusion. I do not possess it and yet I have somehow managed to impress you with it. The first thing that you must remember about me is that I have a knack of imposing on people (you included, in spite of your insight and perception) and I produce in their minds exaggerated notions about myself. That knack has stood me in good stead in life. Even in examinations I usually did far better than others who were my superiors in knowledge. In life I have done the same because consciously or unconsciously, or both, I always try to create an impression. I succeed often enough. And so I have succeeded in impressing you with my theoretical knowledge of psychology when as a matter of fact I hardly know anything about it. But you are perfectly right in saying that I have little sense of intuitive perception. Conceited and self-centred people seldom have it.

Again you are wholly right in saying that I have been a failure in my individual relationships—curiously enough there have been singularly few such relationships in my life. Perhaps I felt my weakness, or was afraid of interfering with my public activities. To find a reason is rather silly. Such things just happen because one is made that way. My most successful relationships are of a casual variety. I suppose the reason for this failure is my incapacity to give. You mention Bapu, but I am quite sure that I have not given him anything that was valuable or worthwhile. I took much from him; what little I gave was not to him as an individual but to him as an abstraction. This is rather vague and yet it has a positive meaning. I have been and am one of those who take from individuals without giving much in return; if I give at all, it is to the group.

I have begun to discuss myself—I like it, I suppose, and yet it is distasteful. Your questions put me on enquiry and the result of the enquiry was not a pleasing one. When the sanctuaries are empty, what is there to reveal? Out of that barrenness and poverty, what is there to give?

Perhaps I exaggerate but essentially this is true. I do not think I am a secretive individual; I am probably franker about myself than the average man. And there are very few happenings in my life that I would take the trouble to hide. And if I hide them, it is because they are trivial and commonplace and my conceit wants a nobler background. Legend has almost invested me with that background and having got it I do not very much care what it is. I have a measure of restraint but that too is the product of a long loneliness. If thoughts pass through my mind, as they do in abundance, I let them go through and fade away. Some stick or come back again and again. Is it worthwhile giving

them the clothing and shelter of words? And how can words imprison the vague fancies of an uncharted mind. Perhaps some sort of intuition might capture them.

I was fascinated by the frontier and I have promised myself another and a longer visit. Early in December probably when it will be very cold.

Love,

Jawahar

4. To Krishna Kripalani[1]

Bombay
2.6.38

My dear Krishna,

So you have presumed to sit on judgment on me and have passed extravagant remarks which will go to increase my conceit. You know that modesty is not my strong point as was pointed out with some force in an article in *The Modern Review* of November last. (Do you know that I wrote that article—the one called 'The Rashtrapati'. It was a low-down trick on my part to write anonymously thus in order to watch people's reactions. Even Ramananda Babu did not know that I had written it).

But I am writing to tell you that my address in England will be:
C/o India League, 165 Strand, London W.C. 2

All good wishes,

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

10

THE INDIAN STATES

GENERAL

1. To E.M. Sankaran Nambudiripad[1]

Allahabad
29.3.1937

Dear Comrade,[2]
Your letter[3] of the 10th March. It is true that the Working Committee have not so far appointed any all-India organising secretary.

Your work as organising secretary should primarily be to spread and strengthen the Congress organisation and make it as democratic as possible. In particular, you should interest yourself in the development of the organisation from below, that is, village committees. You should not lay down or initiate any policies as organising secretary. That is for the provincial Congress committee and higher bodies to do.

In regard to the states, the first thing for you to remember is that there is no fundamental difference in our policy in the states and in the rest of India. There is no question of non-interference and the like. Differences creep in because of the difficulties in working in the states and our desire to avoid conflict there. Therefore subject to your avoidance of active conflict you should act in the states in almost the same way as elsewhere, that is to say, you should form Congress committees from below upwards and build up the Congress organisation.

In Travancore, I understand, the Congress is still under a ban. I think your committee should carry on a continuous and persistent agitation against this ban. We should not accept this limitation of our activity lying down. As I have said above I do not want you to come into conflict with the Travancore Government and therefore there should be no satyagraha of any kind.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-12(i)/1937-38, pp. 267-268, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1909); joined the Congress during civil disobedience movement, 1930; founder-member, Congress Socialist Party, 1934; secretary, Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, 1934 and 1938-40; joined Communist Party of India, 1941 and was its general secretary, 1953-56, 1962-63 and 1967-69; Chief Minister, Kerala, 1957-59; leader of the opposition, Kerala Assembly, 1960-64 and from 1969.
3. He had prepared a plan for intensifying Congress activities in Cochin and Travancore states and had sought Jawaharlal's guidance in carrying out this work.

In Cochin probably there is no ban and therefore you should build up the Congress organisation. I think you should take exception to the fact that the Cochin State Congress Party uses the name Congress. You should ask them to avoid using words which may give a wrong impression. You should also make it clear to the Cochin public that this organisation is not connected with the Congress.

You may, at a suitable moment, call an informal conference of Congressmen in the state to consider the lines of activity. I would suggest further that you must have some kind of organisational basis before you start with demands and the like. You may of course confer with small groups even before.

You cannot expect all-India leaders to visit you. They have not the time for the purpose. Apart from this, they do not go about initiating such campaigns. You must yourself do all the spade work.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. Message to the Deccan States People's Conference[1]

I am glad to learn that the Deccan States People's Conference has fixed Sunday, August 1, for the celebration of an elementary rights day in the states as well as outside. The Congress has often declared itself strongly in favour of recognition of civil rights and freedom in the states. At its Lucknow session it declared clearly that it could recognise no differentiation in personal, civil and democratic liberties as between the states and the rest of India.[2] Every Congressman therefore must inevitably sympathise with this attempt to gain the elementary rights of citizenship for the people of the states. It is well to remember that, while we struggle for freedom in India, people of the states are denied the most elementary rights of citizenship. Civil liberties do not exist at all even in small measure and unless there is freedom of speech, freedom of press, protection of life and property, freedom of association and the like, there can be no progress of any kind. A government or a state which suppresses civil liberties passes judgment against itself, and must be considered not only reactionary but incompetent.

1. Allahabad, 25 July 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 27 July 1937.
2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 188-189.

The Indian states today, judged by this standard, are more reactionary and incompetent than almost any other place or country. Many of us may have far-reaching objectives for the states as well as for the rest of India but the first step for all is to ensure a measure of civil liberty. I commend therefore this celebration of August 1 as elementary rights day for the people of the states and I trust that Congressmen will give it every support. It is fitting that this particular date should have been chosen—a date which reminds us of a great son of India who fought for Indian freedom and whose name is enshrined in the hearts of his countrymen. That date also reminds us of the commencement of the non-cooperation movement which was the beginning of the new phase in the Indian struggle for freedom.

3. Message to 'Rajasthan'[1]

Every day the problems relating to the states are becoming more acute and engaging more of our attention. I believe that their solution lies with the other vital issues of the rest of the country. All national problems are interwoven and interdependent; so we must try to grasp the basic principles and essentials. India cannot be divided into parts; its solidarity is unbreakable and must remain intact. All must have complete freedom and it is inconceivable that half of the country would be enjoying Swaraj, while the other half would remain bound by the shackles of slavery. This very idea leads us to oppose federation. This is the Congress policy and the states' subjects must cooperate to this end.

The world is sure to face the severest war resulting in great upheavals in every country and India will also play her part then; but we must decide regarding the form of administration. I believe that the major provinces are proving a stumbling block in the way of India achieving solidarity. If the big provinces like the U.P. and the Punjab are partitioned, the chances of solidarity might be brightened.

The federation stands condemned since it seeks to prescribe different systems of administration for British India and the Indian states. The administration should be alike for the well-being of the people.

1. Published in a Hindi weekly, *Rajasthan*, issued from Jhansi, and reprinted in *The Bombay Chronicle*, 29 September 1937.

The world has changed considerably since the paramountcy of the states was arrived at a hundred years ago by virtue of the treaties. Hence such treaties bear no relation to the present times.

The elected representatives of the states should be sent to the constituent assembly. But if the states choose to keep aloof, then we will have to do something; in no case will we lose the opportunity. But it is probable that many Indian states might send their elected representatives to the said assembly.

AJMER–MERWARA

4. Princes and the Federation[1]

I thank the different public and mercantile associations for the addresses and purses presented to me but I would not be satisfied with mere eulogies. I want the Congress organization to be strengthened everywhere and the mission of the Congress spread all over the country.

I am an enemy of the present constitution and would like the country to fight it tooth and nail.

I deplore the reactionary character of the Indian princes. They are joining the federation simply to increase their difficulties. The proposed scheme of the return of certain portions of Merwara to the adjoining states is improper and the people must oppose it as it is quite improper for the government to throw them under the rule of the princes.[2]

A commissioner who could levy punitive tax on 1,420 workers[3] for the fault of the police which could not keep order is quite an unfit official.

1. Speech at Beawar, 18 September 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 23 September 1937.
2. In April 1938, the British Government restored to the states of Udaipur and Jodhpur certain areas seized in the early 19th century on the ground that it was no longer necessary for the British Government to retain them in order to enforce law and order.
3. In a scuffle which took place between two groups of textile mill workers in Beawar in 1936 over the question of the reduction in the payment of dearness allowance by the millowners, a loyalist worker was killed. This led the commissioner to impose a punitive tax on those workers who opposed the settlement.

I am astonished to see that the workers, mill owners and the general public did not raise their voice against this injustice. The workers must be united and those who create dissensions are enemies of the workers.

5. The Indian States and the Congress[1]

The position of the Congress *apropos* Indian states is that the Congress is fighting for the independence of the whole of India and would not tolerate one kind of administration in one part and another kind in the other. I am not prepared to accept treaties blindly; they are anachronisms. If conditions mature before the states are in a position to participate, I would not wait to convene the constituent assembly much as I would like the states' representatives in any future constituent assembly.

I have heard complaints made that Ajmer-Merwara is being neglected by Congress leaders. India is a vast country and it is not possible for me to go to every place. Moreover, in the midst of a fight, the attention of the Congress is naturally diverted towards those parts where the fight is the thickest. If the people of Ajmer want to have recognition, it is in their own hands. Only those parts which are ready to play their part in the history of the country that is being enacted can claim recognition.

Political changes have taken place in India during the last eighteen years. Although Congress ministries have been formed, it does not mean that India is free. That day is still far off. Legally, we are still slaves. The British Government is still there to repress and suppress us. A country cannot gain power or independence by mere change of the constitution. It is internal solidarity and strength alone that can make a nation free.

Besides material harm, the greatest harm done by British rule in India is spiritual. The slavery of iron fetters is nothing in comparison to mental slavery. A hundred and fifty years of British rule has engendered this mental slavery among the Indian people. But the Congress has, during the last eighteen years, done much to change this mentality. Today, the poor tenant for whom nobody formerly cared is walking with his head raised.

1. Speech at Ajmer, 19 September 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 22 September 1937.

Mr. Jinnah stands for the independence of India as much as I do, but there is a fundamental difference regarding our methods.

It is said that the Congress movement is the work of a few agitators. Those who say so are completely ignorant of world history. Behind all the revolutions in the world there is the power of the suffering masses. If the government of a country is able to give relief to the hungry and suffering masses, it continues to survive; if not, then there is a revolution and it is doomed. The same questions are behind the revolution that is taking place in India. If the British Government is capable of solving the problems of hunger and unemployment in India, it would remain, in spite of all opposition. The British Government is, no doubt, aware of this fact and wants to solve this question mainly for two reasons; firstly, because hunger and poverty increase discontent among the masses and, secondly, if India is poor, it cannot fill the coffers of England.

British policy has always been to exploit India and the only way of making India affluent is to strike at the root of this policy, so that the river of gold flowing from India to England might be stopped. India will never rest content till she has thrown off this yoke.

Everywhere in the present-day world a constant fight is going on between two opposing forces. In Europe, it is between fascism and anti-fascism; in India and other dependent countries it is between nationalism and imperialism. The fight between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine is a creation of British imperialism. I have every sympathy for the Jews, but they have adopted a wrong policy in looking towards the British Government and in not coming to amicable terms with the Arabs and making Palestine free. Even if no Muslim in India had raised his voice against the British policy in Palestine, I would have taken up the cause of the Arabs because I look at these problems from a purely political point of view.

The formation of ministries by the Congress does not mean that Swaraj has dawned. The main purpose behind this is to secure as much benefit for the masses as possible and thereby to increase the power of the Congress. I cannot say how long these ministries would last. The prisoners of yesterday are the ministers of today and who knows, they might again be prisoners tomorrow.

I am told that some portions of the British province of Ajmer-Merwara are being handed over to Udaipur and Jodhpur states, probably as a bribe to lure these states into joining the all-India federation. If so, it is a most objectionable move. The people of this province must resist it with all their might. They will have the sympathy and support of the entire country in this agitation. It is wrong in principle to transfer any

part of the British territory to Indian states, most of which are very much worse off than British India.

A very curious idea has gained currency that the Congress is indifferent towards the problems of the Indian states. I declare emphatically that the Congress stands for the independence of the whole of India and cannot tolerate that one portion of this country should remain under subjection while another portion is free. The Congress is really a great organisation whose importance has come to be realised even by foreign countries. The Congress is, however, not prepared to initiate a struggle at this juncture in any part of India, but it gives full sympathy and support to the cause of the states' subjects. If they have strength enough to carry on an agitation, the Congress is prepared to help them. It is becoming impossible for the Indian states to exist as they are. The peasants of Bijolia in Udaipur state have been deprived of their lands and property but their solidarity and organization have remained unshattered, in spite of suppression and repression by the state authorities.[2] The Congress has full sympathy for their cause as for the cause of the Jat peasants of Sikar.[3]

The municipal franchise in Ajmer is ridiculous.[4] The citizens of Ajmer should carry on a raging and tearing campaign for its revision. The people of Ajmer should send the best men to the municipality.

I am pained to see that in spite of Ajmer being a big labour centre, there is no labour union here. The first duty of labour is to organize and form a union. I hope that the labourers in Ajmer will form a union so that their demands may have a solid backing.

The Hindu-Muslim problem should be viewed in relation to world politics. The main question before us is of poverty and it affects Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others alike. There is nothing in the Congress programme which benefits any one community more than the other communities. The Hindu-Muslim question is mainly for a few seats and services and it has no bearing on the masses. A few seats and

2. The failure of the government in the Udaipur state to introduce reforms led the kisans of Bijolia to start agitating from 1918. The agitation became so intense that the state authorities called out the army to put down the riotous tenants.
3. In 1935, the Jat peasants of Sikar in Jaipur state agitated for the reduction of taxes on land and remission of land revenue. This movement gradually spread into the neighbouring state of Bikaner and the discontent soon developed into an agitation against landlordism.
4. The franchise was granted to graduates or those owning property and paying income tax. The commissioner could also terminate the membership of any elected member if he was considered undesirable or his activities caused danger to the public peace.

services cannot remove poverty. I am amazed that the strength of a community has come to be reckoned by the counting of heads. Communities have risen not on account of their numerical strength but by their bravery and courage. India, a land of thirty five crores, is under foreign domination and if she attains freedom it will be due to these thirty five crores, and not due to a handful of people however brave and courageous they may be. It does not behove a brave community like the Muslims to put a prize on freedom. Even if the Congress executed a bond conceding all their demands, it would mean nothing because in any future revolution nobody can say where the Congress President and the document would be. It is the height of ignorance to believe that in this age any community can crush another community.

6. On the Proposed Transfer of Territory[1]

Some weeks ago I was in Ajmer and I was informed that there was a strong rumour to the effect that the Government of India was bargaining with the Udaipur and Jodhpur durbars about the proposed federation. It was said that discussions were being carried on for the transfer to these states of parts of Merwara. This was supposed to be the consideration for their joining the federation. There was great resentment at this proposal all over Ajmer-Merwara and especially among the Mers, who would be cut into three parts if this proposal was accepted. The Mers are a brave, compact people who intensely dislike the idea of being split up. They disliked also the idea of being placed under the state governments with their medieval and feudal laws and customs, and hence an agitation has been forming against this proposal. How far the proposal has ripened or not I do not know, but the reaction to this agitation has been numerous house searches in Beawar, including the office of the town Congress committee, and the removal of all correspondence on this issue from that office. In Jodhpur the Prajamandal and the local branch of the Civil Liberties Union have been declared unlawful, and the president of the Praja Mandal, Shri Achleshwar Prasad Sharma,[2] has been arrested. Numerous house searches have taken place there also.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 3 November 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 5 November 1937.
2. (1907-1974); a leading Congressman of Rajasthan; imprisoned several times during the states people's movement; edited Hindi newspaper, *Sainik*, 1931-37, anl *Praja Sewak*, 1940-47.

These are significant facts and they tell us eloquently how the ground is being prepared for the proposed federation. Government and state officials discuss the fate of an old community without any reference to them. They might be transferred like chattels from one government to another. It is of no consequence what they think about it. And if any presume to think and to protest, they are clapped in prison and the organisation declared illegal.

This matter, even apart from the suppression of civil liberty, is an all-India matter, for it involves the transfer of a territory, which is now part of what is known as British India, to Indian states. Such a transfer cannot be accepted or agreed to unless the people concerned themselves desire it. It is clear that they do not.

ALWAR

7. To the Prime Minister, Alwar State[1]

Allahabad
October 21, 1937

Dear Sir,
I understand that an act called the Prevention of Seditious Meetings and Publications Act was passed in Alwar some years back and that this Act is still in force. This Act prevents not only public meetings but even private meetings held in a private place with tickets. Five persons meeting together is presumed to be a public meeting within the meaning of this Act. This is an extraordinary and very unusual limitation of the ordinary right of assembly. I would beg of you to consider how far it is in consonance with present conditions in India. I feel sure that the state of Alwar does not desire to be ranked with those states which are considered very reactionary. I trust therefore that your government will be good enough to repeal this Act and to give full freedom of expression and assembly to the people of Alwar. I am sure this will be appreciated by them.

Yours truly,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-9/1937, p. 109, N.M.M.L.

8. To Shankar Lal[1]

Allahabad
November 9, 1937

My dear Shankar Lal,

Your letter[2] of the 28th and your telegram about Alwar. As you know Indian states affairs came up for a considerable discussion in the A.I.C.C. meeting and a strong resolution was passed regarding Mysore.[3] I do not think any particular good comes by our passing resolutions about individual states. We will have then to pass a crowd of resolutions because much the same thing is happening in a host of states. As a matter of fact we are receiving complaints from all over India about state interference in Congress activities. The matter is a difficult and intricate one and we have to act in such places in accordance with the circumstances and our strength.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-9/1937, p. 91, N.M.M.L.
2. He wanted the Congress Working Committee to consider the case of some political prisoners in Alwar state who were denied facilities to defend themselves.
3. The resolution passed by the A.I.C.C. on 31 October 1937 at its meeting held in Calcutta read: "This meeting of the A.I.C.C. expresses its emphatic protest against the ruthless policy of repression as indicated by inauguration of various restrictive and prohibitive orders and political prosecutions launched in the Mysore state and also against the suppression of civil rights and liberties by denying the elementary rights of speech, assemblage and association.

   This meeting sends its fraternal greetings to the people of Mysore and wishes them all success in their legitimate non-violent struggle and appeals to the people of Indian states and British India to give all support and encouragement to the people of Mysore in their struggle against the state for right of self-determination."

BHOPAL

9. To A. S. Bazmi[1]

Camp Lucknow
May 23, 1938

Dear Mr. Bazmi,[2]
Your letter has just reached me. I am distressed to learn of the state of affairs in Bhopal. I do not know what we can do in the matter except give publicity. This publicity can be given by newspapers, by the Congress office and by the Civil Liberties Union, Bombay. Ultimately of course it is the people of Bhopal who will have to make a move. It is foolish to expect much to happen unless people in Bhopal itself are prepared to do something effective. The situation in Mysore has changed rapidly because the Mysore people took action. I think that the Mysore settlement[3] will have a powerful effect in all the states and will give strength to the people's movement.

I am keeping Mashriqui's letter for the present. I shall pass it on to the Congress office in Allahabad. As perhaps you know, I am leaving very soon for Europe and cannot do much myself.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-35(Pt. VIII)/1938-39, p. 37, N.M.M.L.
2. Editor, *Madina*, an Urdu bi-weekly published from Bijnor. He had forwarded a letter from Tarzi Mashriqui, secretary, Bhopal State People's Association, which gave an account of the people's sufferings in the state.
3. The Congress had sent Vallabhbhai Patel and J.B. Kripalani to Mysore to enquire into the circumstances resulting in a firing on unarmed people at a temple celebration at Viduraswatham in April 1938, as well as other matters relating to Congress work in Mysore state. They reached a settlement with the Mysore Government by which the government recognized the Mysore State Congress, co-opted three Congress members to the constitutional committee, gave assurances on release of political prisoners and withdrawal of prohibitory orders, and reached a compromise on the flag issue.

10. Feudalism in Indian States[1]

The recent tragedy enacted in Mysore state, painful as it was, has led to a settlement between the state government and the people which on the whole must be considered satisfactory and honourable for the people as well as the government. That settlement, if loyally carried out by both the parties, will lead to the strengthening of the people and the speedy realization of full responsible government in the state. It will affect, and has indeed affected, not only the Mysore state but all other Indian states. Throughout India the people of the states are astir and longing to be rid of feudalism and the heavy burdens that crush them. It is right and proper that those who live and work in the provinces should sympathise with and welcome these new stirrings and help the people of the states to the best of their ability. But the burden of the struggle must inevitably fall on the people of the states. The Congress has declared unequivocally that the struggle for freedom is essentially one, wherever it is waged in India, and the freedom that we seek includes the states and the rest of India in equal measure.

We must remember that most of the states are terribly backward and reactionary. The states in Rajputana and the Punjab are especially so. But perhaps the most typical and feudal and politically backward state is Hyderabad, which has the honour of being called the premier state in India. Another state which has to be placed in this unenviable category is Bhopal. The Bhopal State People's Conference inform that no kind of political activities are permitted there and civil liberties do not exist at all. Numerous local newspapers have been suppressed and many printing presses have ceased to function because of the heavy securities demanded of them. Newspapers from outside, if they are suspected of exposing the repression in the state, are forthwith banned. Thus, a dozen newspapers, including *Madina* of Bijnor, have been banned. Public meetings are not permitted even within mosques and temples without a written licence obtained from the city magistrate. This licence is not issued at all for political meetings. Even private gatherings inside the houses have been subjected to this restriction. A very strict censorship prevails in regard to books and literature from outside. Such is the state of Bhopal and indeed of many other states. We cannot be the willing and passive spectators of this suppression of the people of the states. We must tell them again and again what we stand for and help them in their struggle.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 26 May 1938. *The Leader*, 29 May 1938.

11. On Civil Liberties in Bhopal State[1]

I have just seen a statement which the Bhopal Government has issued.

I am sorry I have no time now, as I go to my steamer, to say much about it, but I should like to express my gratitude to the Bhopal Government for this answer of theirs to the charges made about the suppression of civil liberty.

Although the statement is a long one, it is a vague one, and it is difficult to say from the reading of it how far there is freedom of association, expression of opinion and the press in Bhopal at present. That a communal conference was permitted does not mean much, nor does the fact that a semi-moribund Congress committee exists there convey anything. The question is whether organizations working for political reforms are freely permitted, whether public meetings can be held without special permission on each occasion and without restrictions, and how far newspapers can function or are admitted from outside.

It is stated in the statement that action has been taken against a number of newspapers. I am not prepared to say that no action should ever be taken against a newspaper and this may certainly be justified where it increases communal bitterness or personal malice. But where this is used to suppress political work and legitimate aspirations, it is obviously wrong.

The test of civil liberty is how far criticism of the state is freely permitted. I should like to know how matters stand in this respect. The state of political progress can be gauged by the existence and strength of organizations carrying on political work freely, the absence of restrictions on public gatherings for this work and the free admission of newspapers except for very special reasons. In Bhopal, it is stated, there was no press till recently. This in itself is a sign of backwardness and of political inertia which the state should endeavour to remove.

I shall be very glad if I am convinced that in Bhopal civil liberty is not repressed and I shall gladly withdraw any statement that I might have made which may be contrary to facts. But I should like to be convinced of this first. An informal inquiry into this can be made, if the Bhopal Government is agreeable, by the Civil Liberties Union.

1. Statement to the press, Bombay, 2 June 1938. *The Hindustan Times*, 3 June 1938.

BIKANER

12. Repression in Bikaner State[1]

In March 1937 attention was drawn to the Bikaner state by the sudden externment from the state of Shri Laxmidas and Shri Magharam, secretary and president of the Praja Mandal, and of two advocates, Satyanarain Shroff and Shri Muktaram. So far as we could find out these externments were meant to put a stop to the ordinary constitutional activities of the Praja Mandal. They were a pointed instance of the lack of civil liberty in the state. Reports of many other grievances reached our office from time to time and, from enquiries made by us, they seemed to have substance. We hesitated to give any publicity to them without previous reference to the state authorities. On April 24th, 1937 I wrote[2] to the Prime Minister of Bikaner state and sent him a note giving some of these complaints. I requested him to be good enough to let me know how far they were correct. I have had no answer to my letter, nor even an acknowledgment. I feel therefore that I must draw public attention to some of these facts and complaints and I give below copy of the note I sent to the Prime Minister of Bikaner.

Apart from the utter absence of civil liberty, I should like to draw special attention to the feudal basis of the states and the inequality before the law, the opium consumption, and the existence of slavery. The taxes fall most heavily on the poor. These are long-standing complaints. Just at present it appears that attempts to collect money for the golden jubilee celebration of the maharaja are resulting in much suffering.

COPY OF THE NOTE SENT TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF BIKANER STATE ON APRIL 24TH, 1937

1. Inequality before the law—No criminal prosecution can be launched against the 150 *pattedars*, sardars, nobles in the state, who own one-third of the villages of the state, without the special sanction of the state executive council. This council consists wholly of the *pattedars* with the occasional exception of a Prime Minister from outside.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 26 June 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 27 June 1937 and the All India States' People's Conference File No. 4/1937, pp. 223-227, N.M.M.L.
2. This letter is not available.

2. Opium consumption—According to the figures arrived at on the basis of the 1931 budget, there is an income of Rs. 3 lakhs from customs duty on opium. The flat rate per maund of opium is Rs. 500/-. This gives a total consumption of 600 maunds for Bikaner, though it may be that some of this is smuggled out. The population of Bikaner is about a million and thus the consumption of opium for 10,000 of the population comes to 6 maunds. This figure is forty times the figure prescribed in the League of Nations covenant which is a maximum of 6 seers for every 10,000 population.
3. Slavery—In the census report of 1921, the number of born slaves in the Bikaner state is given as 10,904. They are the property of the maharaja or his feudatories, are married or divorced at their masters' will and are given away as presents.
4. Civil liberty—Civil liberty hardly exists in the state and there is no freedom of thought or speech or press or association. Freedom of person is also interfered with as is shown by deportations and the like. The following instances have been mentioned:
   (i) In 1926 or thereabouts, the village of Ramnagar of Mahant Bhairongir was confiscated in lieu of an annuity of Rs. 30,000/-. This contract, it is stated, was testified by the Agent to the Governor General and the Political Agent. This annuity, it is alleged, has never been paid.
   (ii) The temple of Baramandir with adjoining lands was confiscated and sold as the Mahant had hoisted a national flag on the 26th of January 1930.
   (iii) Nathimal Pandit of Sujangarh was sentenced to 3 months' R.I. because he wanted to organise a protest meeting against the action of the state authorities in starting the Bikaner conspiracy case.[3]
   (iv) In the summer of 1936 the services of a teacher in the Bikaner state school were dispensed with as he had suggested the observance of two minutes' silence in memory of Kamala Nehru.
   (v) The only secular magazine *Pushkarendu* had to cease publication as the editor was asked to give an undertaking that he would not deal with the political subjects.
   (vi) Mahatma Gandhi's book, *Hind Swaraj*, is prohibited entry into the state.
   (vii) In March 1937, Shri Laxmidas and Shri Magharam, secretary and president respectively of the Praja Mandal, and Shri

3. On charges of causing disaffection among the people of Bikaner state through seditious writings and speeches, several persons were tried and sentenced in 1932.

Satyanarain Shroff and Shri Muktaram, advocates, were externed from the state.

5. Jail treatment—In October 1936 the prisoners of Bikaner jail went on hunger strike consequent, it is alleged, upon the death by beating of prisoner Prema Jat. Cases of torture are mentioned in Chandanmal[4] case in 1932.

   In barracks of Bikaner jails which are 30′ × 17′, 18 to 29 prisoners are kept huddled together. The ceiling is low and the only ventilation comes through 2 grated doors on one side.

   Habitual and casual offenders are kept together. There is no library and no jail school for juvenile prisoners or others.

6. Expenditure—(i) The Privy Purse. The palace expenditure comes to 12.7% of the revenues of the state, that is Rs. 14 lakhs out of Rs. 114 lakhs. In addition, there are other considerable sums spent by the palace.
   (ii) The budgeted expenses on education amount to 1.2% of the entire budget. Of this a considerable part is granted towards sardars' education.
   (iii) The expenses on hospitals, medicines, sanitation, etc. are 1.5 per cent.

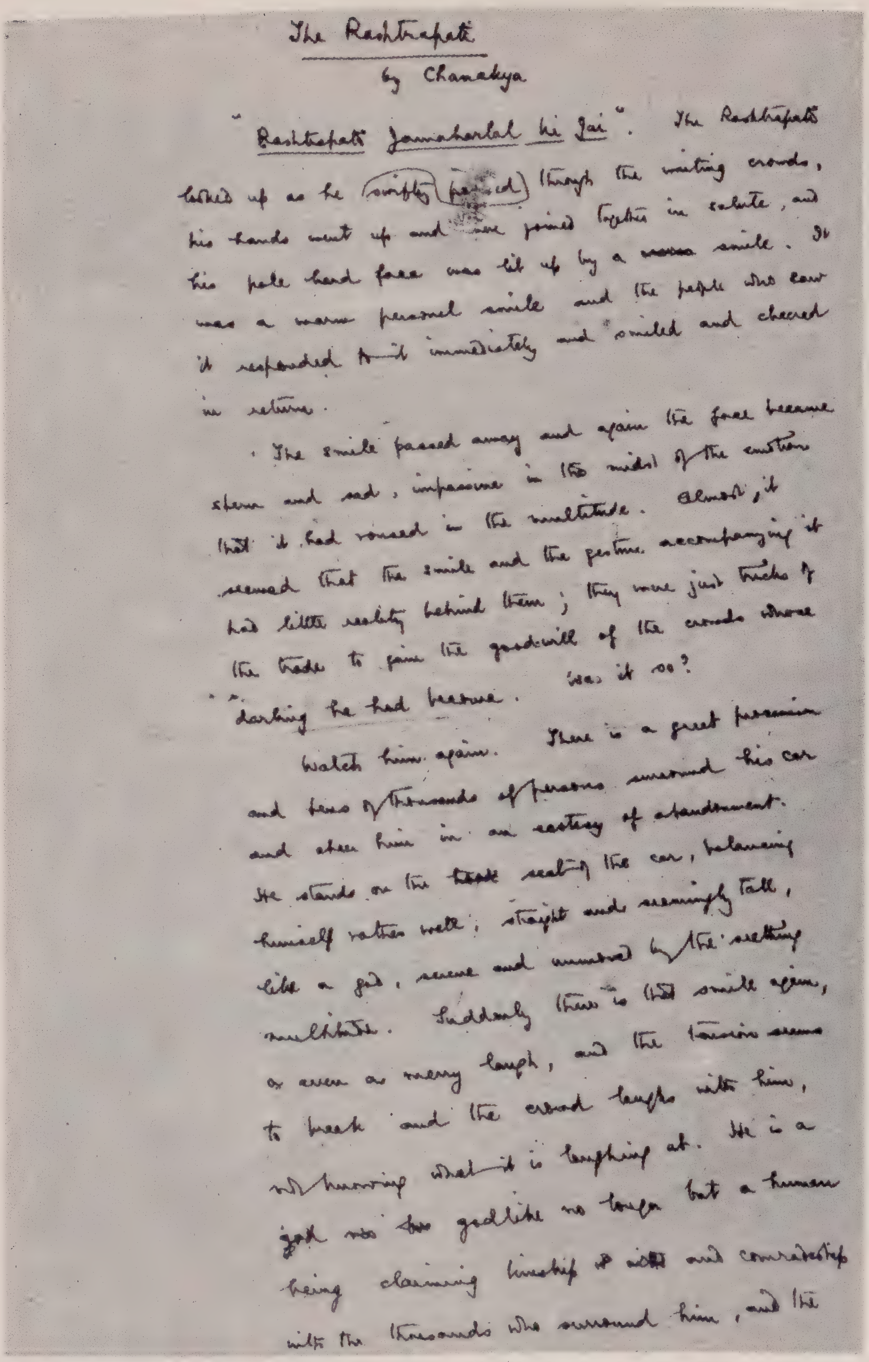
7. Taxes—The basis of taxation is such as falls most heavily on the poorest in the state. Except for a few cereals, no article is exempt from customs duties. Food products such as sugar, rice, etc. are heavily taxed. Cattle grazing fees are charged from peasants and flat rates of taxation have been fixed for every camel, buffalo, horse, cow, sheep and goat.

   Railway freight and fares are the highest allowed under the Indian Railway Act, being 4 pies per mile for 3rd class passengers. The state owns 800 miles of railway but its waiting rooms and other arrangements are exceedingly primitive and backward.

   Annual taxes of varying amounts are levied on the different professions, for example, confectioner, Rs. 10, shoe-maker, Rs. 5/-, carpenter, Rs. 4/-, tailor, Rs. 3/-, porter, Rs. 2/-.

8. Golden jubilee—It is stated that the Bikaner state intends to spend one crore of rupees on the golden jubilee of the maharaja which is expected to be celebrated sometime in September 1937. Allegations have been made that forced contributions for this purpose have been introduced and all, rich or poor, are expected to make them, even the poorest family being expected to contribute a lump sum of Rs. 4/-.

4. One of the accused in the Bikaner conspiracy case.



The Rashtrapati

by Chanakya

"Rashtrapati Jawaharlal ki Jai". The Rashtrapati looked up as he (swiftly) (passed) through the waiting crowds, his hands went up and were joined together in salute, and his pale hard face was lit up by a warm smile. It was a warm personal smile and the people who saw it responded to it immediately and smiled and cheered in return.

The smile passed away and again the face became stern and sad, impassive in the midst of the emotion that it had roused in the multitude. Almost, it seemed that the smile and the gesture accompanying it had little reality behind them; they were just tricks of the trade to gain the goodwill of the crowds whose darling he had become. Was it so?

Watch him again. There is a great procession and tens of thousands of persons surround his car and cheer him in an ecstasy of abandonment. He stands on the seat of the car, balancing himself rather well, straight and seemingly tall, like a god, serene and unmoved by the seething multitude. Suddenly there is that smile again, or even a merry laugh, and the tension seems to break and the crowd laughs with him, not knowing what it is laughing at. He is a god no longer but a human being claiming kinship and comradeship with the thousands who surround him, and the

PAGE OF THE RASHTRAPATI, 5 OCTOBER 1937

ON THE NORTH WEST FRONTIER, TORK .N, ~CTOBER 1937

JODHPUR

13. Feudalism in Jodhpur State[1]

The paths pursued by the Indian states are curious but what shall we say of those states which have British officers to look after them? In the latter case we have the full advantage of state feudalism and British imperialism joined together in happy wedlock. Jodhpur is one such state.

In certain districts of Jodhpur state famine and scarcity conditions have prevailed for some time past. Owing to lack of fodder and water, large numbers of cows have died, and in some places water has to be brought by bullock carts and sold in the bazaars at three annas a pitcher. The Jodhpur Praja Mandal tried to relieve this distress and appointed a relief committee for this purpose. This committee made enquiries into the economic conditions prevailing at present among the peasantry.

The Jodhpur Government did not approve of the enquiry or the relief work and the Praja Mandal president, Syt. Achleshwar Prasad, was informed accordingly. Even this information was conveyed in a curious way. A copy of a letter from the Chief Minister to the Inspector General of Police was sent to the Praja Mandal. This letter ran as follows:

> Will you kindly send for Achleshwar Prasad and warn him that neither he nor any member of the Praja Mandal or other allied institutions such as the civil liberties union should proceed into the districts with a view to spread discontent among the masses? Achleshwar Prasad may also be informed that the pernicious activities of himself and his associates are being closely watched by the government and if they continue to give further trouble drastic action will be taken against them.

As we are not in the habit of giving publicity to statements without verifying them, we referred this matter to the Chief Minister and enquired what the pernicious activities had been to which he took exception, and why he objected to relief work being organized by the Praja Mandal. To that enquiry of ours the Chief Minister has not had the courtesy to reply; perhaps the inference is justified that he has nothing to say in reply.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 7 August 1937. *The Leader*, 9 August 1937.

Information has reached us now of another instance of the Jodhpur Government's vigorous activity under their feudal-imperialist regime. Syt. Jainarain Vyas,[2] who has long been a Congressman and was a member of the All India Congress Committee at one time, was a short while ago travelling by train. He was asked to wake up in the middle of the night at Marwar junction by a crowd of policemen and asked to leave Jodhpur territory immediately. No reason was given, no order was shown. Mr. Vyas insisted on some written order. Early in the morning he sent an express telegram to the Chief Minister. There was no reply and later in the day he was forcibly removed in a lorry to Beawar beyond the Jodhpur state territory.

2. (1899-1963); a leading figure in the all India states' people's movement and founder-member, Rajputana States' People's Organisation; Chief Minister, Rajasthan, 1948 and 1951-54; president, Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee, 1956-57; member, Rajya Sabha, 1957-63.

14. Message to Jodhpur Praja Mandal[1]

Indian people—whether they may be of British India or Indian India—must have rights for full freedom.

I offer my congratulations to the released young men and expect that they will again work among the people with fresh vigour and strength, and will try to get their grievances redressed.[2] While the whole of India is striving for freedom, Indian states cannot remain neutral.

The sympathy of the people residing in different provinces of India goes wholly to the people of the different Indian states, and we consider ourselves united with the latter. Our efforts for achieving Swaraj will certainly benefit the Indian states' people.

1. Lucknow, 1 October 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 2 October 1937.
2. For organising famine relief work in Jodhpur state, some members of the Jodhpur Praja Mandal were detained for about a year.

KATHIAWAR

15. Message to Kathiawar Youth Conference[1]

The Kathiawar youth conference should be held at a place where the executive decides to hold it after consultation with the local workers. The conference should have freedom to discuss the usual matters which such conferences discuss. There should be no limitations or restrictions on the conference, but obviously it must deal with all such matters having regard to the situation. It must not create unnecessary trouble for itself. It should concentrate on civil liberties, fundamental rights and opposition to the federation.

Our general policy is to avoid conflict with the states and this should be adhered to. But this does not mean that we should suppress our activities. If in the course of activities the state intervenes and even arrests a person that cannot be helped. But deliberate civil disobedience or breaches of orders are not encouraged today either in British India or in the states. An attempt should be made to build up public opinion. Where the fundamental right of association is denied, small private meetings should be held and propaganda done through leaflets, etc.

The Congress does not differentiate between the states and the rest of the country. But the difference arises on the part of the states. The Congress cannot undertake any special activity in the states. Such activity has for its basis the people of the states themselves. The Congress will sympathise and give such support as it can.

The youth conference should try to cooperate with the political conference and should not consider itself a rival to it.

Regarding the Gujarat P.C.C.'s arrangements of constituencies, I can say nothing without full inquiry. Such matters are usually left entirely in the hands of the P.C.C. If they have any grievance they should place it before the P.C.C. Personally I think that the principle of election is always desirable. As the Congress constitution is being amended some of these questions will probably not arise in future.

1. This message was sent to the president, Rajkot Youth League. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 7 October 1937.

MYSORE

16. Election Activities in Mysore State[1]

The Mysore state earned a reputation in the past for a progressive policy. Under a succession of able Dewans it advanced educationally and industrially. The present administration seems to be bent on destroying that reputation by following a reactionary policy in political matters. Six years ago it declared war against the national flag and ever since then it has sought to hinder normal Congress activities in the state. Recent developments there show the extent to which the state government is bent on preventing constitutional activities. Early in March next, elections are to take place for the representative assembly of Mysore. This assembly has little power and contains a large body of nominated members. Still the local Congress committee decided to contest these elections and set up a board for the purpose. Shrimati Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya happened to be passing through Bangalore and Mysore in January last. She was asked to deliver speeches in connection with the election campaign. She was immediately served with orders under the Police Act and under sec. 144 Cr. P.C. prohibiting her from delivering any speeches in public or private. This ban was extended even to the proprietor of the hotel where a tea party had been arranged. Similar orders were served on many residents of the state. It thus appears that the state government is not prepared even to tolerate normal election activities and these elections are reduced to a farce. It is necessary that attention should be drawn to this fact and to the conditions prevailing in a so-called progressive state in India. We have to remember that we cannot isolate the states from the rest of India. Ultimately the problems of the two are the same, and one acts and reacts on the other. I trust that the Mysore state government will yet see its way to refrain from interfering in normal election activities, if it does not wish us to believe that these elections have no meaning whatever.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 20 February 1937. *The Hindu*, 22 February 1937.

17. To the Mass Awakeners' Union, Bangalore[1]

Allahabad
June 28, 1937

Dear Comrade,
I have your letter of the 21st June with its enclosures. I note the order that has been issued in Bangalore. This order is certainly a restriction on civil liberty and as such to be protested against. But it is not possible for me to issue public statements because of every order issued by the police or the magistrate. I wonder if you realise that scores of such orders are being issued and, what is much worse, large numbers of our prominent workers are being arrested from day to day. Therefore I cannot take any special steps in the matter. But you should communicate with the Civil Liberties Union and yourself protest against the order in the press and otherwise.

I do not know anything about your organisation, the "Mass Awakeners' Union." It has a curious and novel title.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-57/1937, p. 31, N.M.M.L.

18. To T. Siddalingiah[1]

Allahabad
August 27, 1937

Dear Comrade,[2]
I have received your letter of the 13th August.[3] I have also heard from the Karnataka P.C.C. on this subject. Before I had fully considered your letter I dictated a reply to the Karnataka P.C.C. I enclose a copy

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, p. 643, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1898); joined Mysore state people's movement, 1935; founder-member, Mysore State Congress, 1937; president, Bangalore Congress Committee, 1938; Minister for Industry, Mysore Government, 1953.
3. He wrote that the Mysore Congress Board had decided to resort to some form of direct action to counter the repressive measures adopted by the state authorities.

of this reply. You should communicate on this subject with the Karnataka P.C.C. I can only consider it when I have their views on this subject. It may be necessary for me to refer the matter to the Working Committee.

It is not our wish to come in the way of any legitimate steps that you might desire to take. But I should like you to consider such steps in all their bearings. And further I should like to make it clear that in any action that you might take the responsibility must rest on your board. Obviously, we cannot undertake any responsibility. At any time this would have been difficult. But at the present moment the situation in India is such that we cannot lightly indulge in any form of direct action. But if after fully considering all such matters you are still desirous of undertaking some form of direct action I am prepared to consider the question and refer it to the Working Committee, if necessary. But as I have stated above you should communicate with us after you have consulted the P.C.C.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

19. To Secretary, Karnataka P.C.C.[1]

Allahabad
August 27, 1937

Dear Comrade,

... It is obviously undesirable except for very strong reasons to launch a civil disobedience movement in any part of India at the present moment. At the same time conditions in the Indian states are peculiarly irritating and prevent all Congress work being done. We cannot accept this position and there should be a continuous protest against it. I can conceive of a position arising when this protest takes the form of some kind of direct action. But apart from the principle involved, it must be clearly borne in mind that before any such action is indulged in there should be strength behind that action and general popular approval.

I should therefore like your committee to send me its own opinion on the representation of the Mysore Congress Board. If you have not already received this representation you should send for it.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, pp. 653-654, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

20. To N. Ramamurti[1]

Allahabad
September 1, 1937

Dear Sir,[2]
I am in receipt of your letter of the 26th August forwarding to me a copy of the letter sent by your union to the Dewan of Mysore. I have read this letter carefully and I think it makes out a very strong case against the present government in Mysore. This government has long had a reputation of being progressive but it is quite clear that this reputation is thoroughly unjustified, specially in regard to civil liberties. It is right that public attention should be drawn to this denial of civil liberties in a state which considers itself advanced.

So far as the Congress is concerned it takes every interest in the conditions prevailing in the state. There is no question of pursuing a policy of non-interference. I do not know where you have got this idea from. But because the states are politically more backward it is more difficult to do regular work there. In regard to Mysore our office will gladly give the fullest publicity to what is happening there.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, p. 637, N.M.M.L.
2. Secretary, Civil Liberties Union, Bangalore. He wrote: "... If this severe repression is possible in 'Ram Rajya', to use Mahatma Gandhi's words, what would be the condition of the people in other states? There is not a shred of truth in this description. Mysore is as bad as any other state..."

21. To Secretary, Karnataka P.C.C.[1]

Allahabad
September 2, 1937

Dear Comrade,
Your letter of the 28th August. I have already written to you on this subject. It is clear from various papers that I have received that the

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, pp. 635-636, N.M.M.L.

Mysore Government is indulging in severe repression of civil liberties in the state. I think your P.C.C. should carry on an agitation all over the province against this. You should support Congressmen in Mysore who have to suffer under this regime. I am sure that an agitation conducted by you will have some effect on the Mysore Government which is sensitive to public opinion in India.

I note what you say about the Mysore Congress Board. This Board seems to have been formed quite properly and it should be encouraged in its work. It seems to me that before even the question of any form of civil disobedience arises there is much work that should be done in agitating public opinion and informing it of the repressive activities of the government. Some of the members of your committee ought to go to Mysore for this purpose and interview the officials there. You should also have leaflets printed stating what is happening in Mysore state and distribute them both in Mysore and outside. If in the carrying on of this work any arrest is made, well and good. But a deliberate breach of orders should be avoided. There is great room for public activity in the nature of a protest or agitation even apart from formal disobedience. This is the advice you should give to the Mysore Congress Board and committees. But in giving this advice you should promise them such support as you can give. I think your advice will only then be valuable and have effect.

I suggest therefore that your committee should take this line of action for the present and await developments. The Mysore Congress Board should also act accordingly. Thus the question of active civil disobedience does not arise at present and in any event this matter will have to come to me through your committee.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the president, Mysore Congress Board.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

22. To President, Mysore Congress Board[1]

Allahabad
September 6, 1937

Dear Comrade,

Your letter of the 31st August.[2] I realise what is happening in Mysore and we are prepared to give full publicity to this. I suggest that you might send to our office a properly documented note on this subject which we can release to the press. I do not think it desirable to call for a celebration of the Mysore repression day as suggested by you. There are at present many things happening in India which are even more repressive than anything you are experiencing in Mysore. After all, in Mysore you have so far had a number of orders which are no doubt objectionable. But in Bengal and Punjab and many states arrests and sentences are frequent.

As for your request to extend the period of enrolment of members, this is beyond our power. Members can of course always be enrolled. There is nothing to stop them. But they cannot participate in the voting of the delegates' election unless they are enrolled by a certain date.

I have also received your letter of September 2nd.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, p. 627, N.M.M.L.
2. He wrote about the repressive measures that had been used to curb the legitimate and constitutional activities of the Congress in the state and said that due to intensive official propaganda, Mysore had come to be known as the model state although the real conditions were not known to the people living outside Mysore. He wanted the Congress to pass a resolution condemning the state's repressive policy and for acquainting the people in British India with the real conditions.

23. To Mirza M. Ismail[1]

Allahabad
September 30, 1937

Dear Sir,
I am venturing to address you on the subject of Congress activities in the Mysore state. For some years past many restrictions have been placed on the normal work of the Congress organisation in Mysore state. During the past year a large number of references have been made to me about the additional restrictions placed on prominent Congressmen and others who either visited Mysore from abroad or are residents of Mysore. I have before me a long list of various orders suppressing civil liberties which have been issued by officers of the Mysore Government during the year 1937. I have copies of some of these orders and of ordinances and police notifications issued in the state. I do not, at this stage, wish to put these in detail before you. You are no doubt aware of their contents and of the action taken by the officers of the state. But the text of these orders makes it clear that they are directed against those who do any kind of Congress work, however normal and constitutional it might be. The fact that a person is in sympathy with the Congress is held against him. The desire of a Congressman to "popularise the establishment of a local Congress committee" is held to be something approaching an offence. Meetings have been prohibited over wide areas and a regular campaign against the national flag instituted. All this shows that the Mysore Government is inspired by a spirit of hostility against the National Congress and the national movement. As President of the Congress, I cannot ignore such happenings wherever they might occur. I am therefore taking the opportunity of writing to you to find out directly from you what the policy of the Mysore Government is in regard to the Congress and what it is going to be in the future. We have to fashion our own policy accordingly.

Mysore has often been said to be a progressive state but the facts that have been placed before me go to show that in regard to the suppression of civil liberties it is one of the most backward states in India. Even in parts of Rajputana, which are otherwise far more backward, there is a greater measure of civil liberty than what prevails at present in Mysore. The attitude of the Congress towards the Indian states is well known. We seek to carry out normal constructive and organisational work in a constitutional manner there. We have no desire to

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, pp. 581-583, N.M.M.L.

invite conflicts. But it seems to me that the Mysore state is desirous of preventing us from carrying on this normal work even at the risk of conflict. I should like to be clear on this issue before I advise my colleagues in Mysore and Karnataka as to what they should do.

The Congress is not only a great national organisation but it happens to be connected intimately today with the provincial governments of Bombay and Madras as well as some other provinces. I do not know if the Mysore state desires to cooperate with these provincial governments which adjoin its territories, or has no such desire. These governments must inevitably be affected by the attitude of the state towards the Congress.

I shall thank you, therefore, if you will kindly let me know whether Congress work can be carried on in its entirety in Mysore state, whether Congress leaders and workers from outside can visit the state in furtherance of this work, whether Congress committees can be organised in the state and Congress members enrolled and whether the national flag can be exhibited in the state at Congress functions and on such private buildings and cars on which the owners desire to put it up.

I might add that the national flag is not used or exhibited in token of any hostility to the Mysore state flag. It is the flag which represents the idea of Indian freedom and Indian unity.

I shall thank you for an early reply.

Yours truly,
Jawaharlal Nehru

24. To Mirza M. Ismail[1]

Allahabad
October 19, 1937

Dear Sir Mirza,

Thank you for your letter of October 8th, also the personal letter of October 9th.[2] I appreciate your courtesy in writing to me fully. I received your letters only last night on my return to Allahabad.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, pp. 539-541, N.M.M.L.
2. The Dewan had stated: "... the government of Mysore is not inspired by a spirit of hostility against the National Congress, nor does it wish to put any obstacles in the way of normal constructive work of an all-India character that is carried on in a constitutional manner."

It is possible, and even probable, that we differ on many matters of public policy, and it is hardly worthwhile to argue about fundamental or temperamental differences. Many of us in the Congress differ from each other on important issues. But we also agree on many vital issues and, the agreement being far greater than the disagreement, we pull together. Similarly it should be possible for Congressmen and state authorities, though differing from each other, to find some basis for mutual adjustment. It is obvious that we live in a changing and dynamic world and even in India considerable changes are taking place before our eyes. To ignore them can hardly be wise on the part of anyone who deals with public affairs. The Congress is playing an ever-growing part in the shaping of India's future, and it may be that when that future becomes the present, the Congress will dominate the scene.

The policy of the Congress towards the Indian states has been twofold. On the one hand it has, for various reasons of expediency, refrained from interfering too much in the states. On the other hand it is obviously interested, and intensely interested, in the present and the future of the states. It is interested because the very basis of our policy is an all-India unity, and in the modern world it is hardly possible to think of small units functioning separately. The tendency indeed is to think in terms of a world unity. It is also interested because the interests of the states and what is called British India are inextricably bound together; neither can ignore the other. The proposed federation, to which we are entirely opposed, forces us to think of the states, both in their external relations and their internal structure and economy. Thus we cannot, either of us, escape the problem however much we might like to do so.

In considering the problem, it is not good enough to be tied down by present-day legality, for that legality is part of the problem itself. Nor is it at all feasible that the Congress or any other organisation should remain neutral.[3] It may, for reasons of expediency, avoid various kinds of activity, but in the realm of thought and in the expression of thought, it must have absolute freedom. There is no other possible way in a changing world. To repress the expression of thought is to drive that thought underground, to make it fiercer, and to produce a neurotic condition. If it is a right thought, then to suppress it is obviously wrong. If it is a wrong thought, then to suppress it is to make it more perverted and dangerous. That of course is the argument for civil liberty.

Personally I am convinced that the Indian states system is entirely out of date and it will have to adapt itself rapidly and considerably to new

3. The Dewan wanted the Congress to adopt the position of a friendly neutral in the internal politics of Mysore state.

conditions. Whether it can do so without trouble and upheaval depends on the statesmen who control the destinies of the states. Mysore is in many ways the most progressive of the Indian states and I had hoped that if any state could march with the times and adapt itself to the new order, it would be Mysore. When I find, therefore, that Mysore, in spite of its advantages, is acting in a reactionary manner on the political plane, I am grieved.

You may be quite right in thinking that some of the persons against whom action has been taken by your government are undesirable. I do not know them personally. But I do not think that that justifies the action or lessens in any way their influence. Probably repressive action has the reverse effect. I find that about the very date you wrote to me, or a little earlier, the Congress office, or the office of the Mysore Congress Board, was searched and almost all the files carried away. Further, that security was demanded from the council of action and the president of the board. That seemed to me a strange commentary on your letter.

I realise fully that a government has to take action against certain forms of subversive activity.[4] But usually this refers to violence or appeals to violence. Activity undertaken to spread ideas or to bring about a peaceful and constitutional change in the constitution, is usually given free scope, even though it might not be liked.

I can assure you that I have every desire to avoid anything in the nature of a conflict between the Congress and the Mysore state authorities. Mysore is the last state where we would like to face this. I am also prepared to counsel restraint to our people. But, as you say, restraint has to be on both sides.

I understand from your letter that you have no objection to the use of the national flag at Congress functions, on private buildings and on cars. There is no question of putting this flag up in token of hostility to the state flag or on official buildings. I do not see why any conflict should arise in this matter.

In spite of differences of opinion, I do not see why it should be difficult for us to avoid conflict between the Congress and the state authorities. It is possible for mistakes to occur on either side but if there is a spirit of accommodation, these mistakes will not go far. But I do think that a full measure of civil liberty is necessary for such a spirit of accommodation to exist, and I would beg of you to enhance the prestige of Mysore by ensuring this civil liberty in the state. If civil liberties are suppressed, we cannot remain silent spectators.

4. The Dewan had stated: "... we cannot tolerate subversive agitation, under which head I include attacks on the constitution in general, and on the position of our ruler in particular ..."

For the moment I am not discussing responsible government and the like. This letter is long enough already. Personally I feel that a long step towards responsible government would be one of true statesmanship and would strengthen the state tremendously. But in any event civil liberty is a prerequisite for any progress.

I am returning to you Mr. C. Vijayaraghavachariar's letter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

25. To Secretary, Karnataka P.C.C.[1]

Allahabad
October 20, 1937

Dear Comrade,

On my return to Allahabad I received your letters of the 7th and 9th October. Thank you for them. I have also had letters from the secretary of the Mysore Congress Board. The Dewan of Mysore has further sent me a reply to the letter I sent him.

It is not our practice to deal with local committees directly. We always deal with them through provincial Congress committees.

Regarding Mysore, we have taken no direct steps. It is true that we have corresponded directly with the Mysore Congress Board but this is our practice in regard to all committees that write to us for advice. In the present case as in that of the others we have always told them to confer with you and to abide by your advice, and usually copies of our letters to them have been sent to you. You must further remember that the problems that have arisen in Mysore are important and are of all-India application. We must therefore take interest in them and guide the general policy in regard to them. Mysore itself occupies a curious position in the Congress organisation. It is not fully developed from the Congress point of view. If it was so developed it would be a province in itself. As it is, I do not quite know what it is—a district or less than a district—in our organisation.

Two questions arise in Mysore. The first is relating to civil liberty, that is freedom of speech and organisation of the Congress. It is undoubted that obstructions have been placed in the way of Congress work in Mysore. Congressmen from outside have been prevented entry and

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, pp. 515-517, N.M.M.L.

local Congressmen have been prevented from speaking and organising. We cannot agree to these restrictions on principle. We must therefore protest against them and draw the attention of the state authorities to them. It is true that the state, or any other government, must have authority to deal with certain types of subversive agitation. No state can permit the preaching of violence or of violent activity. But apart from this, agitational propaganda is considered constitutional activity and permitted by all states claiming to be progressive. Ultimately this is in the interest of the state itself, for an open expression of an opinion even though of an undesirable nature has less dangerous consequences for the state than suppression of opinion. Suppression does not end that opinion but perverts it and it cannot be met in the open. That is the principle of civil liberty and it is very foolish and wrong for any state to go against that principle. The British Government has not succeeded in its attempt to suppress opinion and the Mysore state is also not likely to succeed. Therefore I am clearly of opinion that where suppression of opinion takes place we must raise our voice against it and claim freedom of speech and organisation. At the same time people who work on behalf of the Congress must remember that our language must be restrained. It must deal with principles and not with personalities. Anything else is unbecoming to the dignity of the Congress. Unbecoming language and personal attacks are not signs of strength but of weakness. The Congress is a strong enough and powerful enough organisation to deal with its opponents in a dignified way. All Congress workers must therefore work with dignity and restraint. In particular, Congress principles must be kept in view and nothing savouring of violence must be indulged in.

The second point is about the national flag. I understand that the position of the Mysore Government now is that the national flag can be used at Congress functions, on private buildings and on cars. They object to the use of the flag in a spirit of hostility to the state flag, or on any occasion where it may be considered as a challenge to the state flag. I think that on the whole this position is a reasonable one provided it is acted up to in a *bona fide* manner. We do not want the Congress flag to be used in token of hostility to the state or any other flag. Nor do we want to put it up on public buildings and the like. Our desire is that no one who wants to exhibit it on his house or car or in any place belonging to him, should be prevented from doing so. I trust therefore that there will be no difficulty about the flag in future. In case any subordinate official of the state infringes the rule laid down by the state authorities, this matter must immediately be brought to the notice of his superior authorities.

The question of suppression of civil liberties is a more difficult one. The authorities of the state on the one hand assure us that they want to give freedom of expression etc.; on the other hand they carry on acts of repression. Evidently their idea of freedom and civil liberty differs very much from ours. You inform me in your letter that after your interview a number of pending cases were withdrawn and yet immediately after, the office of the Congress board was searched and their files were taken away and notices were served on members of the council of action of the Mysore Congress Board. This aggressive action of the state does not fit in at all with their professions and we must take the strongest objection to it.

I have considered this matter thoroughly and I feel that while on the one hand we cannot submit to the repressive activities of the state, on the other hand the time is not ripe for any action in the nature of direct action on an organised scale on behalf of the Congress. Such direct action should therefore be avoided. Your interview with the Dewan and my correspondence with him have put the Congress position clearly before him and I have no doubt that he will be sufficiently influenced by them. Therefore it would be unwise to precipitate matters at this stage. At the same time we must enter our strongest protest whenever any suppression of civil liberties takes place and we should carry on in a disciplined way our ordinary organisational activities in Mysore, remembering always that this has to be done in a dignified way without indulging in loose language. This will undoubtedly strengthen the Congress in Mysore state. Meanwhile we can watch developments.

You suggest that the Working Committee might send one or two representatives to visit the state. I do not think this is necessary at this stage. We have more important work in hand. But it is desirable that your P.C.C. should take direct and intimate interest in happenings in Mysore state. If you like, you can place this letter before your provincial executive, but it must be remembered that this letter or any other letter from us is not meant for the press. Care should be taken to prevent publication.

Our general policy should be to avoid a conflict with the state authorities but at the same time not to submit quietly to their aggressive activities. If we are wide awake and continue our protest against repression, I am sure that we can produce a marked improvement in the policy of the state. It should also be remembered that as I am corresponding directly with the Dewan of Mysore any aggressive action on our part at the present moment will be premature and improper. If, as I have stated previously, in the ordinary course of our activities arrests take place,

then it cannot be helped and we must not mind them. But an open flouting of an order is not to be indulged in.

I have dealt in this letter with the general position in Mysore and Karnataka. I am sending a copy of it to the Mysore Congress Board.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

26. To Mirza M. Ismail[1]

Allahabad
November 4, 1937

Dear Sir Mirza,
I have received today your two letters dated the 29th October together with their enclosures.[2] I am grateful to you for them.

Since I wrote to you last many events have taken place which have unfortunately worsened the situation, so far as an outsider can judge. I would not presume to express a final opinion about any situation without a close study. I am therefore not in a position to say much as to any particular event that might have happened in Mysore. But a considerable experience of public affairs and movements enables me to form some opinion even from a distance. I try to look at the whole wood although I may not be able to examine the trees closely.

You have no doubt seen the resolution of the All India Congress Committee passed recently in Calcutta regarding Mysore.[3] That resolution was a non-official one pressed by a large number of members. Many of us had no desire to take any steps which might perhaps make it more difficult to end the friction which is developing in Mysore. I

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, pp. 395-403, N.M.M.L.
2. He wrote: "... as these agitators have advanced no reasons for abolishing the present form of government, it would be, I think you will agree, totally impossible to substitute for it immediately anything in the nature of real responsible government. Manhood suffrage is for the present out of the question. Our present electorate represents only a minority of the people.... In these circumstances we cannot but regard the demand for immediate responsible government as a subversive activity..."
3. See p. 538.

might add that even a gentleman from Mysore, who had come to tell us of what was happening there, was not particularly desirous that the All India Congress Committee should pass a resolution. But the feeling of the members was so strong that it found vent in the resolution that was passed.

I have read your letters carefully. I realize that there is a great difference between your approach to the problem of Mysore as well as of India and mine. I am prepared to agree with you that in some respects the people of Mysore are better off than the people of other parts of India. Certainly I think that, among the Indian states, Mysore has been more progressive than the great majority of other states. I appreciate also that the Mysore Government is actuated by a desire to better the condition of the people economically and industrially and thus to raise the standard of living. May I say that, while we work for political change in India, our real objective is the raising of the standard of our people?[4] It is because we feel that no major effort in this direction is possible under the present political conditions, that we seek the political change. Even so, in the provinces where Congress ministries are functioning you will find that a great deal of stress is laid on bettering and improving the condition of the masses economically.

Great movements, like that led by the Indian National Congress, can seldom be understood in terms of the wishes of the few leaders, however big they might be. To imagine, as high English officials have sometimes imagined in the past, that a few agitators can work up the people, is to show a remarkable lack of perception. The processes of history are deeper and there can be no doubt that the National Congress has represented and does represent a historic development of great significance. Individuals may give it some shape and direction here and there, but the urge behind it has come from the sub-conscious self of India herself and represents forces which move nations and millions of men. Because it has represented this reality, it has grown to the stature which it possesses today. While politically and economically India has lagged terribly behind, the National Congress has tried to fill the gap to some extent in the mind of India. But so long as only a mental bridge is made the problem is not solved. The solution can only come when we fit in, politically and economically, with existing conditions in the world and in our country.

4. The Dewan had written: "On the general issue of the advancement of the people of India our difference appears to be one of the positions which we hold. You, as the head of a great political organisation, rely upon political change as the means towards political advancement. I, as the head of a paternal government, rely upon raising the standard of living, and believe that political change will follow in due course."

Generally speaking, the hiatus is far greater in the Indian states than in the rest of India. In most of them even the mental bridge is lacking, and the way political and economic changes are looked upon by those in authority astonishes people who are accustomed to study the modern world and its manifold problems. It seems to me inevitable that this hiatus should disappear in the whole of India if an equilibrium is to be established. Usually what happens is that the equilibrium is sought for first in the minds of men and new ideas spread. For the moment this appears to increase the gap between ideas and existing conditions; it may even bring about conflict between the two. But in reality it is an attempt to lessen and eventually to end the conflict. When those ideas materialize in political and social changes, the conflict ends. Conflict comes when political and social conditions lag behind reality. If in Mysore new ideas spread and seek change, this is surely a sign of the progress of Mysore and should be welcomed as such. All history, and especially recent history in India, demonstrates that the attempt to suppress ideas does not solve any problem; it only aggravates it. Indeed, the attempt fails even to suppress the idea which is objected to.

I have ventured to place this background of my thought before you, rather than discuss particular happenings, as the background and the way one looks at things are important. If our background and objectives differ, then inevitably our appreciation of a particular situation will also differ. Even if there is this difference in background and objective, the only correct way seems to me to be the way of civil liberty. Hence my belief and insistence on civil liberty. I am convinced that wrong ideas flourish less if freedom is given to them and people can discuss them and judge them dispassionately. Suppression leads to emotional reactions usually in favour of the person and the thing suppressed.

I would beg of you to consider this aspect of the problem for I earnestly wish that Mysore should go ahead and should set an example to others. I am sure that vision, generosity and tact on the part of the state authorities will go a long way towards ending the petty conflicts that are taking place now.

You ask me what I think about the demand for responsible government in the state. I can hardly have two opinions on this subject. If I stand for independence and a democratic responsible government in India, I must also desire responsible governments in the states. It would be derogatory to the state and people of Mysore for me to consider them so backward as to be incapable of advancing with the rest of India. I think that the desire to have responsible government is a perfectly legitimate desire and the state governments would be wise in acknowledging it as such and even associating themselves with it. By such action they

would advance their own prestige and strength enormously. Whatever the future may bring for us, it is clear that no part of India can remain isolated or cut off from the rest. Each part will react on the other and the powerful movements which convulse India will send their waves and ripples to the remotest corners of the country. How responsible government is to be established in a state is a matter for careful consideration but the principle has to be admitted and steps taken to give effect to it. A prerequisite for the consideration of the problem is full liberty to discuss it.

It often happens that the wrong kind of people get mixed up in big movements. There may be some, and indeed there often are, people who exploit the movement to their own advantage. But we cannot judge the movement from them, and in taking special action against them we give them greater importance than they deserve. Left to themselves they are likely to find their own level. If so, it is easier to meet them in the open and counteract their activities.

You suggest that the Congress should declare that it does not approve of subversive activities in the state. It is perfectly true, and we have declared it times out of number, that the Congress is entirely opposed to violence in any form or the preaching of violence. Apart from that it is difficult to define the word subversive. Opinions will differ widely and many people may think that even routine activities of the Congress in British India are of a subversive nature. Criticism of a government or the desire for reform in the state apparatus is usually considered perfectly legitimate unless it is accompanied by the preaching of violence. Indeed, freedom of criticism is supposed to act as a safety valve against violence and real subversive activities.

We have to face very difficult problems in India and those of us who look ahead have no desire to add to them in the states. We earnestly desire to avoid conflicts in the states, just as we desire communal harmony. I think I can say with confidence that the Congress has consistently worked for communal harmony and is working for it. The response to our policy among Muslims has been most gratifying and heartening. But you are right in saying that the situation is full of antagonisms and possible conflicts. These are inherent in the world today and if we cannot escape them, we have to face them as bravely and as intelligently as we can.

I have just issued an article[5] to the press. It has nothing to do with the states but as it discusses our general policy I am sending a copy of it to you.

5. See pp. 344-348.

I have written to you at great length. You will forgive me, but I want to be perfectly frank with you. We can only understand each other and lay the basis for future cooperation by mutual frankness.

I am returning the papers you were good enough to send me.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

27. To M. L. Srikantaiah[1]

Allahabad
November 9, 1937

Dear Sir,[2]
I am in receipt of your letter of the 28th October. I have been following with close interest the developments in Mysore state and I am greatly distressed at the repressive policy of the government. As you know this matter came up before the A.I.C.C. and a resolution was passed on the subject. I am in correspondence with the Karnataka P.C.C. and our Mysore friends on the subject. I am sorry that I cannot be of any direct help. The burden of the repression and the struggle must inevitably fall on the people of Mysore. We can only sympathise from abroad and send you our good wishes. If the struggle is carried on, on completely peaceful lines, I am sure that it will end in success ultimately.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, p. 375, N.M.M.L.
2. Editor, *Janavani* published from Bangalore. He had informed Jawaharlal of the ban placed on the publication of his paper by the state government.

28. To Secretary, Karnataka P.C.C.[1]

Allahabad
November 11, 1937

Dear Comrade,

Your committee must have seen the resolution of the A.I.C.C. on the situation in Mysore. This resolution protests vigorously against the campaign and repression carried on by the Mysore state authorities and gives general support to the peaceful struggle against it.

The question arises as to what we can do in furtherance of the A.I.C.C. resolution. The matter is not free from difficulty and a situation that is changing may require changing policies. But our fundamental policy will continue as in the past. This policy is of every sympathy and help but no deliberate law-breaking on our part. A situation may arise when the people in Mysore may want to take action on their own responsibility. It should be clearly understood that such action is on their own responsibility. I have had a long talk with Mr. Reddy,[2] the acting president of the Mysore Congress Board, and tried to explain to him our general policy. I have read a long interview which he gave in Madras and this seems to me a reasoned and restrained statement.

I might inform you that I am continuing my correspondence with the Dewan.

I hope your committee will give every help in its power to our comrades in Mysore and will give them such advice from time to time as you consider desirable.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, p. 373, N.M.M.L.
2. K.C. Reddy (b. 1902); founder-member, Mysore State Congress; president, Mysore State Congress, 1946; Chief Minister, Mysore state, 1947-52; minister in the Central Government, 1952-62; Governor, Madhya Pradesh, 1962-67.

29. To Mahatma Gandhi[1]

Allahabad
14/11/37

My dear Bapu,

I have just read your article on the A.I.C.C. meeting.[2] Regarding the Mysore resolution you have said that it was *ultra vires* of the A.I.C.C.[3] If this was so, then I had no business to permit discussion on it and should have banned it. I am not aware of any constitutional provision which leads to this result and only something in the nature of such a provision can bar a resolution moved in the ordinary way and supported by a majority of the A.I.C.C. Apart from the constitution itself, I am not aware of any previous decision of the Congress or the A.I.C.C. which lays down that such matters should not be considered. Even if there was some such resolution, I do not see how it could prevent the A.I.C.C. from considering a matter if it so chose, unless the resolution was embodied in a rule of practice. The A.I.C.C. is at complete liberty to consider a resolution which may go contrary to a previous resolution passed by itself. If however there is a rule of practice or procedure, this has to be acted upon till the A.I.C.C. does not alter it. There is no question of such a rule, but I do not even know of a resolution which lays down a policy which the Mysore resolution infringes. In statements issued by us in the past mention has been made that the Congress desires to follow a policy of non-intervention in the states. Those statements cannot bar the A.I.C.C. itself from intervening if it so chooses. I cannot understand how the legal phrase, *ultra vires*, can be made to apply.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Also printed in *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 256-257.
2. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* of 13 November 1937: "... the resolution moved in the A.I.C.C. criticising the Congress ministries, and still more the speeches, were wide of the mark. The critics had not cared to study the facts... Let them study and take to heart what Jawaharlal Nehru has said in his elaborate statement on the matter. I am convinced that in their action the critics departed from truth and non-violence..."
3. He had written: "Much more offensive, in my opinion, was the Mysore resolution; and the pity of it is that it was carried with practically nobody to speak out for truth. I hold no brief for Mysore.... In my opinion the Mysore resolution was *ultra vires* of the resolution of non-interference.... The resolution did not set forth the correct state of affairs, and the speeches were full of passion and without regard to the facts of the case. The A.I.C.C. should have appointed, if it was so minded, a committee even of one person to ascertain the facts before proceeding to pronounce judgment..."

Another question arises, what is intervention? Is a mention of a state in a resolution intervention? Is a demand for civil liberties, or a condemnation of repression, intervention? If so, the Congress itself has been guilty of it in specific and unequivocal terms during the last two years.

The Mysore resolution of the A.I.C.C. is very badly worded and, in any event, I did not want it to be passed by the A.I.C.C. just then. But my feelings have little to do with the matter. I have to act as the president of a democratic assembly. The resolution was one of condemnation of repression in Mysore. Are we to refrain from condemning repression in a state in future whatever the nature of this repression? If this repression consists in attacking the Congress itself, insulting our flag, or banning our organisation, are we to remain silent? These matters must be cleared up so that our office and our organisation might know definitely what line we are to take up.

You have said that the A.I.C.C. should not have passed the resolution without at least hearing the other side. Do you think that it is feasible for us to appoint inquiry committees to go to the states? Will the states agree? On several occasions I have suggested this to the states—not a committee but just an individual to go there and inquire from both sides. They have invariably turned this down.

This Mysore matter has been going on for a long time. The Karnataka P.C.C. has taken some steps in the matter. Their secretary has had a long interview with the Dewan of Mysore. I have repeatedly written to the Dewan and put a large number of specific cases before him. He has replied at length without, in my opinion, justifying the state policy. For months past I have been restraining Congressmen in Mysore from indulging in any disobedience of orders and, in fact, no orders have been disobeyed, except by Nariman recently.[4] The Karnataka P.C.C. ultimately considered the situation and condemned the policy of repression in Mysore and asked us for further directions as to what they should do. It is hardly correct, therefore, to say that the A.I.C.C. condemned anybody unheard or *ex parte*. We pursued all the ordinary avenues open to us.

I am writing all this to you as I want to be clear in my own mind what our policy is. You have censured the A.I.C.C. and me for the

4. K.F. Nariman was arrested in Bangalore on 24 October 1937 while addressing a students' gathering.

course we pursued. I have not yet understood how and where I was wrong and so long as I do not understand it, I can hardly act otherwise.[5]

Yours affectionately,
Jawahar

5. Mahadeva Desai replying on 19 November 1937 on behalf of Mahatma Gandhi wrote that Mahatma Gandhi "was clear that there was an infringement of the policy of nonintervention... Bapu wants me to assure you that he never intended to censure you...."

30. To R. S. Hukerikar[1]

Allahabad
November 19, 1937

My dear Hukerikar,[2]

Your letter of the 14th November. I might inform you that I was distressed to read Mahatmaji's criticism of the Mysore resolution. I think he has done the Mysore people, the K.P.C.C. as well as the A.I.C.C. an injustice in passing an opinion without fully finding out the facts. I am quite clear in my own mind that neither Mr. Reddy nor you were in any way to blame for what happened. Nor do I think that the A.I.C.C. acted in any unconstitutional way. It may have been better for the resolution not to have been put forward in the way it was. That is a matter of opinion. But I do think that Mahatmaji has been unjust in his criticism. I might inform you that I wrote to him immediately on reading his criticism and asked him to explain it to me. It is not my habit and it will be improper for me to enter into a public controversy with him on this subject. Therefore I am writing to you personally and I do not want you to give publicity to this letter. But my mind is quite clear on this subject and I want to assure you that I have no grievance against you or the Karnataka P.C.C.

You need not come to Allahabad to explain this as no explanations are necessary. It will be difficult for you to catch me here as I shall be moving about and going to Assam on the 25th.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, p. 367, N.M.M.L.
2. Secretary, Karnataka P.C.C. He wrote that Mahatma Gandhi's criticism would split the Congress ranks and cause a suspension of all activities, while those in jail would continue to rot.

I am sending a copy of your letter to Mahatmaji. I hope you do not mind.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

31. To K. C. Reddy[1]

Allahabad
November 19, 1937

Dear Mr. Reddy,
I have your telegram. I am sorry to learn that you have resolved against interviewing the Dewan. It seems to me always a wrong policy to refuse to interview people, whoever they might be, except under very special circumstances. An interview does not mean a surrender. I do not know if an interview was suggested by the Dewan or not.

As for your deciding to resist prohibitory orders by disobeying them, I have already explained to you that we cannot encourage this in any way or take the responsibility for it.

I want to tell you that I was distressed to read Mahatma Gandhi's criticism of the Mysore resolution of the A.I.C.C. Evidently, Mahatmaji was not in full possession of the facts. I have written to him on the subject drawing his attention to some of the facts. But I do not want to enter into a controversy with him in public. Nor do I want you to give publicity to our differences of opinion.

I think that you and Mr. Hukerikar proceeded in a very proper and constitutional way and were desirous of avoiding anything that might embarrass. I am sure that if Mahatmaji had known all the facts he would not have criticised in the way he has done.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, p. 359, N.M.M.L.

32. On the A.I.C.C. Resolution on Mysore State[1]

Mahatma Gandhi's views and advice always command weight and it has been our good fortune to be guided by them for these many years. I have therefore paid full attention to his criticism of the last A.I.C.C. meeting held in Calcutta and have sought to discover wherein I erred as chairman of that meeting. On the merits of a resolution, opinions can often differ, and as chairman, I have no business with them, though as executive head of the Congress organisation for the year, I cannot keep aloof. But I do not wish to discuss the merits of any of the A.I.C.C. resolutions. Like other Congressmen I am bound by these resolutions till they are varied or rescinded. But the criticism lays stress on this that truth and nonviolence were violated and the resolution on Mysore was *ultra vires* of the A.I.C.C. It would be helpful to me and to others if these serious charges were substantiated, for only then can one profit by that criticism. I want to realise wherein my error lay so that I might not repeat it. If that realisation does not come to me, I am likely to err again. That realisation has not come to me in spite of every effort to understand the criticism.

It is possible that undue emphasis was laid on certain aspects in some of the speeches. That usually happens in a debate. But I cannot recollect anything that can be described as a violation of truth or nonviolence. So far as the wording of the resolution was concerned, I see nothing in it which can in any way be described as a departure from truth or nonviolence. It is possible of course that the wording might not be happy or to the liking of some people.

The statement that the Mysore resolution was *ultra vires* is a definite charge which ought to be capable of full substantiation. I have been unable to discover any basis for it. The Congress constitution in no way prohibits or bars such a resolution. No Congress or A.I.C.C. resolution, so far as I know, comes in the way. The procedure adopted by me was, I think, perfectly correct. But even if it was not so, the resolution cannot become *ultra vires*. These difficulties come in my way in accepting Gandhiji's criticism. So long as they are not removed, I can only act in accordance with the dictates of my own mind. Unfortunately, I have to function for another two and a half months as Congress President and occasions may arise during this period when I have to give my ruling or opinion. I should therefore like to be convinced of the error of my ways to prevent another lapse.

1. 26 November 1937. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937-38, p. 277, N.M.M.L. Jawaharlal drafted this statement, but then decided not to publish it.

33. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Camp Gauhati
November 29, 1937

Dear Comrade,
You must have seen the comment of Gandhiji on the A.I.C.C. resolutions, notably Masani's resolution[2] and the Mysore one. He has stated that these resolutions violated truth and nonviolence and the Mysore resolution was *ultra vires* of the A.I.C.C. Opinions will no doubt differ on the merits of these resolutions. But apart from the merits, the criticism is about truth and nonviolence and about the legality of one of them. As chairman of the Committee I am naturally concerned and if the criticism is justified, I acted erroneously. I want to understand this and to find out where my error lay. I wrote to Gandhiji immediately on the publication of his article but unfortunately he has not been well and the message he sent me in reply did not clear my doubts. I am receiving numerous letters on the subject asking for my opinion and I do not know what to say in reply. Unless I am convinced to the contrary, I must hold by my previous opinion and act according to it whenever opportunity arises.

I am greatly exercised over this matter and at one time I thought of issuing a press statement. I drafted this on my way to Assam but later decided not to issue it.[3] I am however sending you a copy of it with this letter.

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.
2. The A.I.C.C. had adopted a resolution moved by M.R. Masani: (1) condemning the continuance of repression even under the much-advertised new constitution; (2) regretting that even in Congress provinces all political prisoners had not been released and repressive laws were still in force; (3) demanding the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners and detenus and the repeal of all repressive laws; and (4) urging the A.I.C.C. to instruct the Congress cabinets to carry out the election pledges in this connection and set an example to the other provinces.
3. See the preceding item.

I shall be grateful if you could let me have your views on the two points raised.[4] I need not add that I do not want views on the merits of the resolutions.

Please mark your reply 'personal' and send it to Anand Bhawan, Allahabad. I expect to be back on December 13th.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. In his letter of 24 December 1937, Rajendra Prasad wrote that "the traditional Congress policy in regard to Indian states was one of extending its sympathy and moral support to the legitimate and peaceful struggle and the responsibility and the burden of carrying on that struggle within the states must necessarily fall on the states people themselves... the resolution of the A.I.C.C. at Calcutta goes much beyond exercising moral and friendly influence...amounts to a direct interference with the internal administration of a state and to participating in a struggle that may be going on..." About Masani's resolution, he wrote: "the reference of Mahatma Gandhi must be more to the speeches made in reference to Mr. Masani's resolution than to the wording of the resolution itself."

34. To Mirza M. Ismail[1]

Allahabad
December 25, 1937

Dear Sir Mirza,

I must apologise to you for not answering your letter of the 22nd November till now.[2] I was away in Assam when it came here and I received it a fortnight later. Even after that I have been so much overburdened with work that I could not deal with it. I wanted to write to you at some length and hence I kept putting the reply off. Yesterday I received your letter of the 21st December and this made me feel how guilty I was. I am now writing to you in some haste and cannot deal fully with your two letters. Perhaps I may write at greater length later. Meanwhile I shall briefly refer to one or two points.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, pp. 241-243, N.M.M.L.
2. He wrote to Jawaharlal: "I do not look forward to (and should feel bound to oppose) any form of all-India unity that destroyed the autonomy of the states..."

I am afraid the report of my speech[3] at Allahabad to which you refer does me the reverse of justice. I cannot conceive of having said what I am reported to have said. The question of civil liberty is one in which I have taken deep interest and which moves me greatly. It is obvious that a state has to take action sometimes to suppress civil liberty. But the measure of the progress of that state is that this action should be limited in scope and should occur at the rarest intervals and only when immediate danger is apprehended. Almost as an invariable practice liberty of speech should be given, even though the speech is not to our liking. Obviously there is no point in saying that we permit things that we like. It is only when we permit things that we do not like that we adhere to civil liberty. I hope in the course of the next few days to write fully in the press on this question of civil liberty. But may I say here that I have been greatly distressed at the suppression of speech and action by the Mysore Government which is not justified in any way according to my way of thinking?

Almost daily I see in the papers some fresh instance of such suppression and of a crusade against the national flag.

You are right in thinking that I look forward to an all-India unity. This unity will in all probability be a federal unity leaving a great deal of local initiative to the federating units. But you are not correct in saying that the Congress as such desires, now or later, to dictate policy to governments and states alike. When India is free I do not know whether the Congress will continue to exist or what form it will take. At the present moment it happens to be the only organisation which can be said to represent Indian opinion as a whole. I do believe that ultimately it is the opinion of the people of India that should prevail both in the states and in the rest of India. In the states it will primarily be the opinion of the people of the states. The Congress, as you are doubtless aware, does not hesitate to express its opinion on international matters. How then can it remain silent in matters intimately affecting it in the states? The

3. Mirza Ismail wrote: "... Your speech at Allahabad calling upon the citizens to cooperate with the police who are 'not the enemy of the people', as you rightly said, must strengthen the hands of Congress ministries in the provinces and of administrators elsewhere. But what gave me especial pleasure to read was a report of your speech at the meeting of the citizens of Allahabad the other day in which you have said that 'there should be freedom of speech with this limitation that improper and dangerous speeches, which are likely to create mischief, should not be allowed and the mischief-makers should be arrested.' Need I say how entirely I agree with the sentiments you have expressed?"

proposed federation has to be faced by the Congress, and the states are meant to be integral parts of this federation.

I have no doubt that you have come in contact with public men in various parts of the world. You must have realised that no one outside a narrow sphere in the British Government can think of the present Indian states except with astonishment. They seem to be so entirely unique in the world of today. A hundred or two hundred years ago they were not unique. But the world has changed, and we have not.

Thank you for the books on Mysore that you have sent me.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

35. To K. C. Reddy[1]

Camp Bombay
January 4, 1938

Dear Mr. Reddy,

As you are aware the Congress policy regarding Indian states is not clearly defined and is sometimes interpreted variously. The changing situation all over India will probably lead to a greater clarification in the near future. Meanwhile I can let you have my own opinion as to the general line to be adopted in Mysore. I have already informed you previously to avoid open conflict, in the nature of disobedience of orders, with the Mysore Government. I think you should try to strengthen your general position with the people and carry on propaganda for civil liberties and responsibility in the government. This should be done in a way so as to make a rapprochement possible whenever an occasion offers itself. If you can come to an understanding with the state government which results in improving present conditions, I think it will be highly desirable for you to do so.

You must remember that the larger problems of India are intimately tied up with each other and major changes are likely to come all over the country once they begin moving in that direction. A state by itself cannot resist them. Therefore while I want that you should continue vigorously to cultivate public opinion for the two objectives that I have

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88/1937, p. 109, N.M.M.L.

mentioned above you should not shut the door to an understanding with the administration of Mysore.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

36. To P. Rangaswamy[1]

Allahabad
March 4, 1938

Dear Mr. Rangaswamy,[2]
Thank you for your letter. I have read Sir Mirza's speech.[3] It is a foolish utterance without much significance and I do not think it is worthwhile my saying anything about it.

You can rest assured that I shall take the liveliest interest in the affairs of Mysore state in particular and the Indian states in general. Meanwhile I think it is all for the good that you should function without the name of the Congress for a while. As soon as I have a little leisure I shall probably write about Indian states.[4]

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88(Pt. 1)/1938, p. 13, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1904); a lawyer and politician of Bangalore; took active part in Mysore state people's movement.
3. Speaking at the meeting of the Karnataka Sahitya Parishad at Bangalore on 27 February 1938, Mirza Ismail had said : "Frantic efforts have been made to create disaffection in the state. We can, therefore, afford to disregard Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru when he talks of 'repression' in Mysore..."
4. See p. 540.

37. To H. K. Veeranna Gowdh[1]

Allahabad
March 31, 1938

Dear Friend,[2]
I am glad to learn from your letter that you are having a session of the Mysore Congress next month. I should have liked to attend it as you suggest. But I am afraid that it is not at all possible for me to do so owing to heavy and important work here.

I wish to send you, however, my good wishes for the session. As you know I am greatly interested in the problem of the Indian states and I have taken particular interest in the movement for additional freedom in Mysore state. I am quite convinced that these states should aim at full responsible government and I therefore sympathise with your aim.

I was glad to find that in the recent elections for the Mysore Assembly which were brought about by resignations of your members on this very issue you had complete success. This demonstrated the popular strength behind your movement. I hope however that you will realise that any real progress will only come to you through your own organised strength. I hope therefore that you will organise yourselves effectively and will work peacefully and with sobriety to attain your objective. You must not be discouraged by apparent reverses or the displeasure of high officials. The only thing that harms is for us to leave the right path in a moment of excitement. If you stick to perfectly legitimate and peaceful methods, you are bound to succeed. Mysore is one of the leading states of India and I am glad to see that the people of Mysore are also taking the lead in getting rid of autocratic and feudal restrictions. I wish you success in this enterprise. You will remember always, I hope, that Mysore state, as every other state in India, is an integral part of India. Your freedom therefore is a part of our freedom. We hang together and we shall finally succeed together.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88(Pt. I)/1938, p. 79, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1899); imprisoned several times for participating in the Mysore state people's movement; president, Mysore Pradesh Congress Committee, 1952; minister, Mysore state, 1956-67.

38. To H. C. Dasappa[1]

Allahabad
April 11, 1938

Dear Mr. Dasappa,[2]

I have your two letters of the 12th and 24th March.[3] I have already written to you how delighted I was at the success of your candidates for the legislative assembly elections. I think these elections have, in a large measure, justified what your party has been doing in the past.

You inform me that your president went to Delang to consult Mahatmaji.[4] I did not go to Delang myself and so I could not meet him. I do not know what advice Mahatmaji gave and what you have decided subsequently. Anything that I may say, therefore, may be out of place. I do not wish to conflict with any other advice that you may have received and besides I do not know what the developments have been.

It is clear that the Dewan's attitude is not one of friendliness towards you and that he wants to weaken the strength of the Mysore Congress. It is also clear that he will oppose in every way the demand for responsible government. I have no doubt in my mind that you should stand for responsible government. I am also clear that Congress members who are appointed members of the committee of reforms or the federal committee should be responsible to the Mysore Congress and should take directions from them. They must not be just individual members doing as they like.

Personally I would not break on the issue that the Dewan has not expressly mentioned responsible government in his terms of appointment for the committees. But I would not agree to this being excluded from

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88(Pt. I)/1938, p. 63, N.M.M.L.
2. (1894-1964); founder-member, Mysore State Congress; minister, Mysore state, 1947-52; member, Rajya Sabha, 1954-57; member, Lok Sabha, 1957-62; Minister for Railways, Government of India, 1963-64.
3. In his letter of 12 March, Dasappa had written that the Congress in Mysore had won all the seats in the bye-elections. He added : "We are greatly encouraged by the volume of authoritative pronouncements all round about the feasibility and desirability of reforms in the states.... How I wish the Working Committee at this critical stage had not banned parliamentary and political activities in the name of the Congress in Mysore."
4. The Mysore State Congress Board sought Mahatma Gandhi's advice regarding their cooperation with the official committee appointed for the introduction of reforms in view of the state government's silence on their demand for responsible government.

purview. It should be open to the Congress members to be recommended if they so choose.[5]

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

5. The Mysore Government proposed to appoint four Congressmen on the committees to consider the question of reforms and federal affairs.

39. To V. S. Narayana Rao[1]

Allahabad
April 22, 1938

Dear Comrade,[2]
I have received your letter of the 17th April sending me copies of the order issued by the district magistrate and the statement issued on behalf of the Mysore Congress. So far as I can see your flag satyagraha has met with some success.[3] I am glad that you have maintained the honour and dignity of the national flag.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88(Pt. I)/1938, p. 97, N.M.M.L.
2. Secretary, Mysore State Congress.
3. The agitation against the government order banning the hoisting of the national flag at the Congress convention held in Sivapur was started on 10 April and a large number of people courted arrest.

40. To H. C. Dasappa[1]

Allahabad
May 26, 1938

Dear Mr. Dasappa,
I have your letter.[2] I think that on the whole the Mysore settlement[3] is a good one and you should profit by it and gain strength.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-88(Pt. II)/1938, p. 221, N.M.M.L.
2. He gave an account of the developments which led to the settlement with the Mysore Government.
3. See p. 539.

There is no possibility of my going to Mysore. I am just leaving for Europe.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

ORCHHA

41. To R. S. Shukla[1]

Allahabad
September 28, 1937

Dear Sir,[2]
I am in receipt of your letter of the 14th September. I regret the delay in answering it. This was due to my absence from Allahabad.

Capt. Lal Awadhesh Pratap Singh[3] is the president of the Mahakoshal Provincial Congress Committee, that is to say, the provincial Congress committee for the Hindi-speaking parts of the Central Provinces. Adjoining Indian states are usually attached for purposes of Congress work to the provincial Congress committee. Congress work is organized by provincial Congress committees in accordance with the general instructions issued in that behalf from the All India Congress Committee. Our office does not engage directly in local work. Capt. Awadhesh Pratap Singh as president of his provincial Congress committee is thus supposed to organise Congress work in the area under his charge. I do not know what detailed steps he has taken in this matter especially in any Indian state. Our general policy is that we should establish the Congress organization both in British India and the Indian states and should carry on the constructive work of the Congress more especially

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-87/1937, pp. 83-84, N.M.M.L.
2. Political secretary, Orchha state.
3. (1888-1967); served in Indian army for many years before joining the Congress in 1921; founder-member, Baghelkhand District Congress Committee, 1931 and its president, 1932-35; president, Mahakoshal P.C.C., 1937; member, Constituent Assembly of India, 1946-50; Prime Minister, Rewa state, 1948; Chief Minister, Vindhya Pradesh, 1948-49; member, Rajya Sabha, 1954-60.

in the states. It is not our desire to come into conflict in this work with the state authorities. But otherwise we make no distinction between work in British India and in the states. These are the general instructions issued by us regarding work in the Indian states. Presumably it is in accordance with these instructions that Capt. Awadhesh Pratap Singh has appointed some organisers in various parts of his Congress province.

I am not personally acquainted with Pandit Rameshwar Prasad Sharma,[4] or if I have met him I do not at present remember him. Should you desire to enquire about him I would suggest to you to communicate with Capt. Awadhesh Pratap Singh, president, Mahakoshal P.C.C., Gopalbag, Jubbulpore. I trust that we will have the full co-operation of the state authorities in the work that our organisation does in Orchha.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. A Congressman of Jhansi district.

41. To R. S. Shukla[1]

[illegible] September 28, 1937

I am in receipt of your letter of the 14th September. I regret the delay in answering it. This was due to my absence from Allahabad.

[illegible] Provincial Congress Committee, that is to say, the provincial Con- [illegible]

1. A.I.C.C. [illegible] N.M.M.L.
2. Political [illegible]
3. (1889-1957): served in Indian army [illegible] joining the Congress in 1921, [illegible] president, [illegible] president, Mahakoshal P.C.C. 1937; member, Consti- [illegible]

11

IMPERIALISM AND FEDERATION

1. Interview to The News Chronicle[1]

Edward Thompson: You are reported as saying that India will not 'touch' the new constitution. What do you mean by it?

Jawaharlal Nehru: There is no question of not touching the new constitution, because the fact of our seeking elections shows that we are coming into touch with it. What is meant is that we do not approach this constitution in a spirit of cooperation. It has been forced upon us against our will. We dislike it thoroughly and we propose to make its functioning as difficult as possible. The federal part of it is a monstrosity.

ET: India's position being so bad, would it not be better to use the constitution as a means of giving Indians some chance of relieving the misery?

JN: The constitution is bound to fail because it cannot solve any major problem of India. These problems of the land, poverty and unemployment demand solution. We do not think there can be a proper solution under British imperialism. We have indicated the way out through a constituent assembly.

ET: My criticism of the Congress is that it has not the courage to remember that such people as the princes' subjects exist or to speak up for their rights. What do you think?

JN: The Congress does not ignore the princes' subjects though its activities have largely been concentrated in British India. It stands for the same political, economic, civil and other liberties for the Indian states' subjects as for the others. It has not been able to do much for the Indian states, because it has its hands full elsewhere and many of its leaders do not want to add to their burdens. But the principle is admitted and proclaimed.

ET: Would not a genuine Dominion Status be as good as independence?

1. Printed in *The News Chronicle*, (London), 2 January 1937. Jawaharlal was interviewed by Edward Thompson during his visit to India in December 1936.

JN: I cannot conceive of a genuine independence within the empire for India even to the extent of that of the British dominions. There is no parallel between the two. I can conceive of a free India coming to a friendly arrangement with Britain.

ET: Would you like India to come under a dictatorship such as we see in fascist countries?

JN: I am entirely against the idea, more especially the idea of a personal dictatorship. I can imagine, however, that in times of grave crisis, a measure of group dictatorship might be necessary. But this should not be extended to ordinary times.

ET: Is not the unity of India largely artificial and recent? Would it not be better if India split into separate nations on the lines of race and language?

JN: I think it would be unfortunate if India is split in that way. The unity of India is not only desirable but highly necessary, and I doubt if there are any intelligent people in India who think differently. This unity, however, should not be an oppressive one, but should give full freedom for cultural and other diversities.

ET: India's poverty appals every visitor; how do you propose to tackle it?

JN: It seems to me that the only way to solve outstanding Indian problems is to have an all-embracing planned system of Indian economy, dealing with the land, industry—big-scale and village—social services, etc. Such a system can only take effect when obstructions in the shape of big vested interests have been removed. Therefore it becomes necessary to remove most of these obstructions.

ET: The British are not your only difficulty. Do you not think that between India and freedom are her communal quarrels and also the princes?

JN: I do not think the communal problem will present the slightest difficulty when economic questions are being considered. As for the Indian princes, it is absurd to expect that they should carry on in their feudal, autocratic way because of some treaty they made with representatives of the British power a hundred years ago. Ultimately it will be for

the people of the states themselves to decide what the position of the princes will be.

ET: Some provinces send no men for the army, others send a few hundred; the overwhelming majority come from two provinces. Do you think you can ever have a democratic government, while a section of India holds the weapons and takes the risks for the rest?

JN: The army question offers no insuperable difficulty. The army as well as a kind of militia will have to be recruited from all over India. There is no reason to suppose that the present Indian army will not be loyal to the new order. The British army, of course, will have to go.

2. The Main Problem of India[1]

Some accident, or the play of circumstances which often seems to us as the working of an unknown fate, brought Reginald Reynolds to India at a peculiar point in our recent history. He came on the eve of a great eruption, of human earthquakes, which shook the hundreds of millions of India as well as that empire which still holds sway here. He even played a little part in the tense drama which followed the Lahore Congress of December 1929 and preceded Gandhiji's famous march to the salt sea and civil disobedience. What happened to him immediately after that I did not know, for suddenly we were caught up in the whirlwind of a mass upheaval and of a powerful and entrenched government trying to suppress it.

But Reynolds saw something of this drama and of this great conflict between elemental forces, far greater than the individuals concerned in it. And that gave him an insight into the soul of India which was so passionately struggling for freedom, into the appalling poverty and misery of the Indian people which lay behind this elemental urge, and into the social conflicts which were becoming more and more evident and were colouring the nationalist and social aspects of our struggle. He saw this struggle, as it should be seen, in the wider picture of the world struggle.

I am glad therefore that he has written this book. From one such as he a book on India claims attention. It is immaterial whether one agrees

1. Allahabad, 25 February 1937. Foreword to Reginald Reynolds' *The White Sahibs in India*, (London, 1937).

with him or not in everything he says. But what he says has knowledge behind it and insight and an appreciation of the wider issues. And so all of us, in India or England, can profit by his analysis of our problems and think with greater clarity about them.

There are two kinds of books on India written by Englishmen. The great majority of them are of the imperial and patronising variety which point out to us the high destiny of the British Empire and our folly in not appreciating this patent fact. They are generous with their advice to us as to how we can fit in with this grandiose scheme of things. The other variety of books, very few in number, are written by Englishmen who are attracted towards our freedom struggle but are apt to consider it on sentimental grounds. Because their approach is more friendly, sometimes they show a greater insight, but their treatment is not very helpful in understanding the problems that confront us.

If we are going to solve these problems, we must understand them. We have to unravel the knots that have tied us up, and in order to do so, our approach must be scientific and must take into consideration the needs of the masses in India. That is the problem of India, not the princes or the landlords or other vested interests, English or Indian. Imperialism has accentuated, and often produced, these knots, so the imperialist approach is out of question. The sentimental approach, common enough among my own countrymen, though inevitable under the circumstances, does not carry us far.

Every book that helps us to understand scientifically the background of the Indian struggle is to be welcomed. And so I welcome this book and commend it to Englishmen and Indians who want to help in the solution of one of the major problems of our age.

3. To Horace G. Alexander[1]

Allahabad
June 17, 1937

Dear Alexander,

Your letter of the 12th May reached me yesterday on my return from Burma and Malaya. I note that American publishers are not agreeable to undertake the issue of *India and the World*. In Burma I was asked for my permission for a Chinese edition of the book. The Chinese

1. Horace Alexander Papers, N.M.M.L.

translator wants to get it published in Shanghai. I told him that so far as I was concerned I would be very glad if a Chinese edition came out. The publisher will probably be writing to me. I do not propose to press for any special terms as I am keen that the book should be published in China. I suppose that no formal permission from Allen and Unwin is necessary for this purpose.

I have seen your letter to Gandhiji. I have read it with interest. I shall not say anything about it here. But I do not think that the question of the services is really so important as to come in the way, at any rate, in the sense that there may be fear of victimisation. There need be no such fear. But the fact remains that the whole outlook of the services is such that it cannot fit in with a changed order. Nobody wants to victimise them and thus carry on a kind of feud. But the fact remains that they are a powerful vested interest and they are coming in our way often enough.

The questions before us, however, are more fundamental than the future of the services and it is as well that this should be realised. I have been somewhat out of touch with the happenings in India owing to my absence for six weeks.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. To Asaf Ali[1]

Allahabad
5.8.1937

My dear Asaf Ali,

I have read with interest the letter you have addressed to the Chief Ministers of the provincial governments.[2] Have you addressed this to Congress ministers only or to others also?

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P.L. 16/1937, p. 15, N.M.M.L.
2. He had sought the Chief Ministers' views on the resolution to be moved by him on behalf of the Congress Party in the central assembly recommending that immediate steps be taken to reduce central expenditure, more particularly defence expenditure, so that more money could be provided to the provinces to undertake nation-building activities. He had mentioned that if Indian troops replaced British troops, there would be an approximate saving of about Rs. 20 crores.

There is one matter in this which I do not feel happy about.[3] You say at page 3 that "in the absence of such a scheme, it is for your government to say whether you consider the British troops necessary for the internal security of your province." A little later in the same paragraph you refer to defenceless and unarmed mobs. The question you have put seems to me out of count in Congress circles or indeed in any nationalist circles. We demand the elimination of British troops anyhow and even a suggestion that they might be necessary for the national security of a province is something that goes against the basic policy of the Congress. The whole demand of independence is terribly weakened if once we think in terms of the British troops protecting us either from external invasion or from internal commotion. So far as the latter is concerned, the very idea of British troops acting against Indians, even if the latter might be termed mobs, is something which outrages my sentiment of nationality. Who are we to be protected by the British troops? It seems to me that the principles governing our national movement, the objective that we have so often proclaimed, and the dignity of our people preclude the possibility of the employment of foreign troops even for a while, and even in a restricted measure, against our own people.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. Referring to the Simon Commission's recommendation for maintenance of an internal security army for each province, Asaf Ali asked if in place of such a force, the provinces had any alternative arrangements to suggest. He added, "if the police force in your province cannot be relied upon in the event of internal disturbance...there is no reason to doubt the capacity and fitness of the Indian troops to deal with any emergency...."

5. Hunger Strike in the Andamans[1]

For some days now we have lived under the oppression of thought that nearly two hundred of our countrymen are on hunger strike in the

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 6 August 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 7 August 1937.

Andamans and are painfully starving to death. My feelings were strong and I dared not give them utterance immediately. And what could I add to the moving and poignant appeal of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore who came out of his retirement and, in spite of age and ill health, said eloquently what all of us feel in our hearts?[2]

If there is any humanity, any sensitiveness of human suffering in us, we must respond in full measure to that appeal and to the silent but powerful cry from the Andamans. I dislike hunger strikes; I do not encourage them. But I know something also of the horror that surrounds these people who, in desperation, are driven to these painful courses. Some of us may imagine that their action was precipitate. What do they know of the innumerable attempts by other means to get rid of sufferings and humiliations?

The question of political prisoners being sent to the Andamans has agitated the country for many years now and the hunger strike and death by starvation has already taken place in the past. But our governments grow more and more callous and think that their prestige is more important than the lives of hundreds and the wishes of millions. I am told that even on the present occasion every effort was made by other means and, when these failed, a few political prisoners resorted to hunger strike. Taunts and insults on the part of the authorities followed and this resulted in the spreading of the hunger strike to hundreds.

It should be remembered that the hunger strike in the Andamans is far worse and more dangerous than in India, for the climate of the Andamans is bad and complications soon follow. News does not reach us and we live in suspense today, full of anxiety for the fate of our young men. But let it be understood that, if anything happens to these young men, India will be aflame with anger and will not forget it or forget

2. In his statement issued on 2 August 1937, Tagore said: "On the continent of Europe they have their Devils Island, their Lipari, their concentration camps and other specially built hells for primitive exhibition of humanity, but in England they have no such unhallowed places for intensification of the suffering by wrenching away prisoners from their own soil. When, to our dismay, we find that infringement of their own rule has been made possible exclusively for the subject races, the insult of their distinction humiliates all of us and I offer my protest in the name of my country...once again the heartless inflexibility of governmental machinery has triumphed over its sense of humanity and justice. It is only in the province of Bengal that hundreds of boys are still detained without trial and the press is now and then gagged to remind us of the fact that the unanswerable will of the people of this country and the civil liberty that the people of Bengal enjoyed have become as unreal as a mirage in the desert."

those on whom the responsibility for this will lie. Constitutions are as dust in the scale if they cannot give us the power to protect our own people. We have seen what is called the provincial autonomy functioning in Bengal and in the Punjab. It is the same ugly thing that we have known so long and which crushes our people.

How long are we going to tolerate the continued incarceration of detenus? It is time that halt was called to this infamy. The recent order of the Bengal Government forbidding, at the instance of the press censor, even the publication of news of the 'Detenus Day' shows the depths to which this government has fallen. Each one of us, who is silent, compromises with these evils and tolerates them. This is not a matter concerning Bengal only but one which affects the whole of India and which touches the honour and dignity of every Indian. I trust that every Congressman will do his utmost at this juncture to make the voice of the people heard and their wishes acted upon in regard to the Andaman prisoners and detenus. That is our primary duty today.

I understand that in Bengal, August 9 has been fixed as 'Andaman Prisoners Day'. This day is too near perhaps for an all-India demonstration. But on this day or the day as soon after as possible, I trust that demonstrations will be held all over India.

I should also like to mention the strange and revealing case of Pandit Parmanand who was sentenced to life term in the first Lahore Conspiracy Case in 1915.[3] For twenty two years he has been continuously in prison, although the life term seldom exceeds fifteen years and is usually less. Yet he continues to be in prison.

3. Parmanand (b. 1890) and several others who were convicted in the first Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1915, were members of the Ghadar Party who had returned from America. They had planned an uprising of the Indian troops at Lahore, Ferozepur and some other places in the Punjab on 21 February 1915 as a prelude to a general uprising. Of the 291 persons tried for the conspiracy, 42 were sentenced to death, 114 were transported for life, 93 imprisoned for varying terms and 42 acquitted.

6. On Government's Attitude towards the Andaman Prisoners[1]

I have carefully read the Viceroy's reply[2] to Mr. Mohanlal Saxena. I appreciate his method of approach to this problem which is agitating India so deeply. He has tried to reason and put the government point of view in a manner which is somewhat novel for a Viceroy and the Government of India.

I am convinced that he has wholly failed to justify the government's attitude. It is perfectly true that no government can surrender simply because there is a hunger strike.

Personally I am opposed to hunger strikes except for very exceptional reasons, but it would be equally wrong for the government to ignore and defy popular opinion and sentiments.

In the present case he must know that all India is vastly agitated and is unanimous in its demand regarding the Andaman hunger-strikers. Because of this widely spread all-India feeling, provincial governments, where Congress ministries are functioning, have asked for the repatriation of the Andaman prisoners to their respective provinces.

The government, which for reasons of prestige, ignores this national feeling and demand, creates and worsens the very situation from which it seeks escape.

There is argument enough in favour of putting an end to the penal settlement of the Andamans and specially to bring back all political prisoners. But even apart from this, is it not enough that for the people of India this has become a vital question which moves them to their innermost depths? Is it conceivable that any really popular government would defy public opinion in this matter?

It must be remembered that this question of the Andamans has not suddenly arisen because of the hunger strike. It has come up again and again and roused public feeling, so the government had plenty of time to take action apart from the threat of hunger strike.

A hunger strike is really very bad, but one must also remember that the prisoners have no means of access to the outer world and that they grow desperate and resort to this method.

1. Interview to the press, Bombay, 19 August 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle,* 20 August 1937.
2. The Viceroy wrote to Saxena that the government had found no change in the attitude of the prisoners in regard to terrorism. He also thought that their repatriation to their home provinces would encourage them to use the method of hunger strike. He denied that the prisoners in the Andamans were made to live in unhealthy conditions.

The whole question of terrorism has been treated in India in an utterly wrong way. One cannot suppress terrorism by terrorism even though the latter might be on behalf of the government. One has to find out the root causes and remove them.

In India today, it is well known that terrorism has ceased to have any real significance. Probably it would have long ceased to exist if the policy of the government had been different. It has now disappeared because those who were attracted to it have come to realise that it is a foolish and infantile policy injuring the cause of the country.

I am convinced that the growth of the Congress movement and the spread of new social ideas have broken the back of terrorism.

A recent statement[3] made by some of the discharged prisoners from the Andamans condemning terrorism on their own behalf and on behalf of other prisoners in the Andamans, has a very real significance which I am sorry to say the Viceroy has not appreciated.

It is confirmed by numerous other reports that have reached us from other sources. Not to meet this frank approach, and to ignore it, is to intensify that very psychology of which the government disapproves.

It will embitter not only the unhappy prisoners in the Andamans who hover between life and death, but also the people of India as a whole. Today a humane and tragic sight is uppermost in the people's minds and the shadow of death hovers over them. While we argue people might well be dying. I trust still that this human side will be considered by the Viceroy. No government has ever lost even its prestige by doing the right thing, but even if prestige was in the balance, there are other factors in life which count more.

3. They had stated, on their behalf as well as on that of other political prisoners in the Andamans, their dissociation from and disapproval of the policy of terrorism. They added that they had come to realise that such a policy was wrong and injurious to the national cause.

7. On Federation[1]

A constituent assembly is not the development of a step taken in legislative assemblies. Legislatures can only condemn the present Act and demand the summoning of a constituent assembly. They cannot produce conditions under which such an assembly can meet.

1. Interview to the press, Bombay, 19 August 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 20 August 1937.

A constituent assembly must be an absolutely sovereign body deriving its authority from the Indian people alone. It can only come into existence, therefore, when such sovereignty in reality rests with the people of India or when the Indian people are on the verge of real power. The time for such an assembly would come when the people of India are in a position to enforce their will.

The report of what I said in regard to federation, when I was addressing the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee workers in Hindustani, is not quite correct.[2] What I said was that having regard to the clear policy of the Congress in regard to the proposed federation, any person, if he agreed to this federation or anything like it behind the back of the Congress, would be betraying the interests of the Congress and, as such, of the nation.

Obviously opposition to the proposed federation does not mean opposition to the idea of federation. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact accepted the idea of federation and most of the thinking people in India believe that some kind of federation must ultimately be established in India, but the proposed federation is a monstrosity and cannot be accepted in any shape or form.

Therefore, a resolution passed in the assembly is in the nature of a repetition of the people's wishes in this matter, just as a resolution of the Congress is a declaration of the national will. It does not and cannot by itself lead to a constituent assembly. For that the whole balance of power in India has to shift from the side of British imperialism to the Indian people.

How to bring about a constituent assembly does mean the same thing as how to achieve the freedom of India. A constituent assembly divorced from Indian freedom is an absurdity.

2. See pp. 432-435.

8. On Federal Government[1]

In the previous chapters of this book the Government of India Act 1935, embodying the new constitution for India, has been examined in some detail and criticisms have been offered from the point of view of

1. This was a summary of conclusions and recommendations written by Jawaharlal in the train from Bombay to Lucknow on 21-23 August 1937, for the book entitled *Federal Structure*, (Bombay, 1937), edited by K.T. Shah. J.N. Papers. N.M.M.L.

the Indian people's ideal of political evolution and progress. That ideal, it must be remembered, is based on the sovereignty of the people and it refuses to recognise any limitations or reservations to this sovereignty.

But while we lay stress on the independence of India and the establishment of a free national state, we recognise fully that the world of today urgently demands an international order and the fullest cooperation between nations to solve the problems and end the conflicts that afflict mankind. Science and modern industry and trade and finance and transport and communications, in fact the whole basic texture of the world today, is international, and hence the problems we have to face are essentially international and require international solutions. To think or act in terms of a purely national state, largely cut off from the rest of the world and developing itself independently of it, is to ignore realities and to refuse to take advantage of the many avenues of progress and advancement which modern conditions offer. A narrow autarchy does not fit in with these conditions and must inevitably lead to reaction and a throw-back.

Thus, though we stand for an independent national state, we are entirely opposed to a nationalism and a state ideal which are based on a hatred of other states and a desire to dominate over other peoples. We have seen and see today how this limited and aggressive national outlook leads to a continuing state of international anarchy, developing from time to time into dreadful and devastating wars. International peace and the well-being of the world have become one and indivisible. That peace depends on a solution of the political and social problems of the world and the evolution of a world order, and we believe that such a solution and order must inevitably be based on the principles of socialism. But that is a larger question which we are not called upon to discuss here. We wish to emphasize here that our conception of an independent national state is in no way opposed to the development of this world order, and that we would be perfectly prepared to make sacrifices, and even to accept certain limitations and assume burdens, in common with others, in the interest of international cooperation.

But this cooperation must be real, effective and between free units. The League of Nations, as constituted today, has demonstrated the futility of international cooperation on a wrong basis and with the purpose of maintaining a *status quo*, unjust in itself and in the interest of a few dominating powers. It has become an impotent instrument for maintaining peace and collective security and is ignored and insulted at every turn. It cannot undertake the solution of any fundamental problem because it has neither the power to do so nor the will to tackle the roots of that problem.

The so-called British Commonwealth of Nations is still less a nucleus of international cooperation as it represents a dominating imperialist group, holding a large number of subject peoples in its power, and combating other imperialist groups and powers. It will have to change beyond all recognition before it can serve as a basis for cooperation between free nations. India's association with the group is an enforced one and it has worked and is working to the detriment of India. The people of India have therefore declared and emphasized their will to be dissociated from this group, and this has become a primary objective of the national movement. Any continuation of this association means a continuation, in some form or the other, if not political then economic, of the domination of Britain over India, and the imposition of restrictions which prevent the people of India from developing on their own lines and according to their own needs and desires. The independence of India and the recognition of the sovereignty of the Indian people are thus the essential prerequisites for the consideration of the problem of India's future constitution.

When we examine the new constitution critically in the light of our political objective and ideals, we find that the foundations laid there cannot serve even as a basis for raising the structure of a free India. The provincial part of the constitution is full of imperfections and restrictions, but the federal part has nothing whatever to do even with the conception of a free India; it can only be considered as a barrier which has to be removed in its entirety before we can go ahead in any direction. We shall thus have to build anew on entirely new foundations. The National Congress has demanded that the constitution of a free India must be drawn up by a constituent assembly, elected on the basis of adult suffrage, and this seems to us the only feasible and democratic method of procedure.

What will be the nature of this new constitution? It is difficult in the changing and dynamic world of today to prophesy about the future. Old established notions, which were taken for granted but yesterday, have no sanctity today. Ideas are at war, not only on the ideological plane, but often enough on the field of battle itself, where argument and debate are drowned in the clash of arms. New hopes and desires of social equality fill the peoples of the world, while at the same time fascism has raised its ugly head and suppresses and pours contempt on the democratic process. Political democracy, which seemed so obvious and inevitable a generation ago, is weak and ailing, simultaneously attacked on two fronts and deserted by many of its former adherents. On the one hand, political democracy is considered insufficient to solve the problems that confront us and resolve the conflicts of interests of

classes or of nations, and an economic democracy is advocated. On the other hand, the very principle of democracy is attacked and dictatorship and authoritarian methods of government find favour with many. Even the friends of democracy feel that some variations are necessary in the old nineteenth century methods and approach, for today our problems grow more and more complicated and technical and difficult of detailed consideration by parliaments. Experts and special committees are taking an ever-growing part in public affairs, and parliaments, even in the democratic countries, confine themselves to laying down general principles and policies. The state is being forced by stress of circumstances, even where capitalism prevails, to socialise public utilities and advance in the direction of socialisation.

In Spain we have had a disturbing example of a democratic state being attacked by vested interests, aided by foreign powers, when these interests realised that the democratic process might endanger them.[2] The issue there still hangs in the balance, but the lesson is clear that privileged classes and interests do not always submit to the democratic process when this threatens to weaken their special position. When votes are lacking, recourse is had to arms, even the arms of the foreigner against one's own people.

In Russia there has been a swing towards political democracy, so far as the constitution is concerned, but this has not apparently made much difference to the methods of government which are still largely authoritarian, though they are based on the consultations and participation of millions of people.

These, and like questions, trouble the minds of thinking people all over the world. They may trouble India's mind too later, far more than they are doing today. For the present, politically-minded India is of one mind in this matter and it works for the establishment of a fully democratic national state. Democratic constitutions are fundamentally similar and it would serve little purpose for us to discuss the details of such a constitution. We shall content ourselves therefore by referring to certain aspects only of a constitution for India.

Such a constitution must be based on the recognition, in law and in fact, of the sovereignty of the people of India. No foreign power or authority can thus frame this constitution for us, and it must be the self-expression of the Indian people. Nor can any alien authority be permitted to interfere in any way in the working of this constitution. We recognise, however, that an independent India will gladly cooperate with other nations in the international sphere and, for this purpose, it

2. See *Selected Works,* Vol. 7, pp. 582-586.

will be prepared voluntarily to limit its sovereignty, to the extent that other nations limit theirs, in the establishment of an international order. No other limitations or restrictions can be accepted.

The unity of India must be maintained by the constitution. The unity, both geographical and cultural, is a patent fact of Indian history, and political and economic unity has also become essential for us. Having regard to the vastness and diversity of the country, as well as other factors, a federal system of government seems indicated. But this federation will have to be entirely different from the federation proposed under the Government of India Act 1935, under which there is no uniformity and an unnatural alliance is sought to be made between feudal states and autocratic states and more or less democratic provinces. A large measure of uniformity is essential, and we should try to aim at removing all distinctions between what is called British India today and Indian India or the states. It is possible that, owing to the backwardness of the states, they might not be able to come up to the standard of the provinces for some time. A transitional period, not too long, may be necessary to allow them to approximate to this standard. But, at the very beginning, the objective of having uniformity should be recognised and acted upon to the furthest extent possible. A large measure of democracy must come to the people of the states before the provinces can federate with them. The same terms of federation should apply to provinces and states alike. This will mean the giving up by the rulers of their autocratic powers, and also, inevitably, a considerable modification of their treaties. We cannot accept these hundred-year-old treaties as valid today or unchangeable.

Thus the states will have to fall in line with the provinces in regard to political institutions and principles and methods of government. The establishment of a federation will also necessitate a new regrouping of the states, either among themselves or with the adjoining provinces. Even under the present Act some combinations have been formed for the purposes of representation in the proposed federation. The states vary in size too much and most of them are too small to be treated as federating units. Transport and irrigation have also necessitated coordination in the past. This coordination will necessarily increase in all departments with the economic development of the country.

The present division of provinces was made for administrative reasons only to suit the convenience of British administration, or because of historic reasons connected with the growth of the British power. It has little to do with linguistic, cultural or economic considerations and there is no reason why we should keep it unchanged. While most of the states are too small to be treated as federating units, many of the

provinces are on the other side and are too large to make suitable economic or administrative units. The composite Presidencies of Bombay and Madras sprawl over western and southern and eastern India and contain within their areas diverse elements which might well form separate provincial units. Bengal and the United Provinces are unified areas, linguistically and culturally, but both of them are enormous and have a vast population. We should therefore endeavour to reconstitute our provinces on a rational and scientific basis.

This does not mean that we should ignore local sentiment in this matter; that sentiment cannot be set aside even for other important considerations. Indeed, we feel that the wishes of the people concerned must be the dominant factor in coming to a decision, and the reconstitution should be such as to give a fuller chance of self-expression to the people concerned. We do not wish to encourage in any way the formation of communal provinces, but we feel that it might be possible, in a scheme of redistribution, to give important groups and minorities territories within which they can feel that they have full opportunities of self-development, without which a creative life is hardly possible. We do not think this will increase communalism or separatist tendencies. The sentiment of nationality is growing and, with the removal of minor causes of friction, communal feelings will decrease.

The Indian National Congress has accepted and acted upon the principle of linguistic divisions of provinces.[3] That division usually coincides with cultural groupings and local sentiment, and should be made the basis of a future reconstitution. The Presidencies of Bombay and Madras would easily split up, according to this, into Gujarati, Marathi, Canarese, Telugu, Tamil and Malayali areas. In the north there is the huge Hindustani-speaking bloc, which is much too big for a single province. Even the United Provinces might well be divided up into two or more suitable administrative and economic units. Bengal also is too large to be treated as a single unit, and should be made into two or more provinces. The Punjab seems to suggest a division into three parts.

But we need not consider a detailed scheme of reconstitution of provinces. If the principles are accepted, the actual lines of division will not offer any great difficulty. These principles are: the province should not be too small or too big. If it is too small, the burden of

3. Under the Congress constitution adopted in 1920 at the Nagpur session, the provincial Congress committees were directed to reorganise themselves according to the linguistic distribution of provinces.

administration is too heavy and the possibilities of economic development are limited. If it is too large, then it is unwieldy and efficient administration becomes difficult. Large provinces are also to be avoided as they might tend to increase provincialism and separatism. A large number of relatively small provinces will encourage the growth of a feeling of nationality and the unity of India. One or two large provinces, joining in a federation with many small ones, will tend to dominate the others. We feel therefore that provinces should be more or less of a uniform size, though we do not expect this principle to be applied with any strictness. Other, and more important, considerations will have to be borne in mind and these will interfere with its application. These other considerations are: linguistic and cultural, economic and local sentiment.

It may also be possible to give, even within the framework of a province, a measure of autonomy to a cultural group or minority. This has been done, with satisfactory results, in the U.S.S.R., where the federating units have autonomous areas for national minorities. How far this will be possible in India, it is difficult to say, but the idea might be explored further.

It is of the essence of democracy that the community should have the right to change or vary its constitution, but it is usual to have some safeguards in regard to certain fundamental provisions of the constitution. These hindrances to rapid change give a greater permanence to these provisions; they check the executive authority and prevent it to some extent from abusing the great powers it possesses; they protect minority rights and thus give a feeling of security to the minority groups. What these fundamental rights should be would largely depend on the nature of the state. In an individualist capitalist state they would differ from corresponding rights in a people organised on a socialist basis, for in these two forms of state organisation both the basic institutions and the governing outlook differ from each other. But whatever may be the future social organisation of India, there are certain fundamental rights guaranteeing the freedom of the individual which we would like to ensure and to be incorporated in the constitution. These rights are: freedom of conscience and religion; free expression of opinion; free association and combination; protection of the culture and languages of minorities; equality of all citizens before the law, as well as for public service or trade or calling, irrespective of religion, caste or sex; and others of a like nature.

The National Congress, at its Karachi session in 1931, adopted a resolution on fundamental rights, and considerable value is attached to the assurances contained in this resolution by the minorities and various

groups in India.[4] The national movement is thus committed to the incorporation of these rights in the constitution. We are convinced that the Indian constitution should contain a guarantee in regard to these fundamental rights for the assurance of all minority groups in the country. For this purpose, the Karachi resolution of the Congress, and the provisions of Western constitutions relating to civil liberties, might be taken as models.

It should be remembered that civil and individual liberty, often restricted and circumscribed in what is known as British India, is totally absent in nearly all the Indian states. A guarantee of the nature is thus especially required for the peoples of the states.

With the establishment of a federation, the executive authority of the federal government will extend to the whole country and will comprise all the departments of the state in India, except in so far as a number of subjects come within the scope of provincial autonomy. The chief executive authority may be vested in the head or chief of the state who may be given an appropriate designation in keeping with our traditions. *Rashtrapati* has already become a well-known and popular word in India, and the chief of the state might well be called *Rashtrapati*. But the name is immaterial, what we have to consider is the position of such a person in our constitutional structure and the power and authority he is to possess. Should he be just a figurehead like the President of the French Republic or should he have the large powers which the President of the U.S.A. possesses? We feel that he should exercise his functions exclusively on the advice of his ministers. At the same time we would not like him to be just a figurehead. Under the exceptional and dynamic conditions prevailing in the world today, some measure of initiative should be given to our chief. His position might be midway between the Presidents of the French Republic and the U.S.A. He must act as the constitutional chief of a responsible government.

The federal executive would consist of a council of ministers, recruited from that party in the federal legislature which commands a majority of votes in the legislature. These ministers will be collectively responsible to the federal legislature and their salaries will be voted every year.

The federal legislature should be bicameral. We are against the two-chamber system in the provinces but we think that in the federation two chambers are desirable. One of these chambers, which for the sake of simplicity might be referred to as the lower house, should be elected directly by the people of India on simple uniform franchise such as

4. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 511-513.

adult suffrage. The other chamber, or the upper house, should be elected by the federating units as well as by special interests. The upper house should be the guardian of the rights and interests of the federating units as well as of minority and cultural groups, and of the fundamental rights laid down in the constitution. Its legislative powers need not be coeval with those of the lower house, and its authority in regard to the voting of the finance bill or the federal budget should certainly be considerably less than that of the lower chamber. Its special function will be to revise the legislative proposals of the lower house and to scrutinise them from all points of view.

The device of the joint sessions of the two houses is not a very happy one and often causes estrangement. It should not be used as a matter of course in every case of conflict, but should be rarely adopted and only for certain well-defined purposes, such as the amendment of the constitution, reconstitution of a province, regrouping of the federated states, or in the event of a sudden emergency arising. Such joint sessions should only be held on the advice of the ministry in office.

Each chamber must have the right to regulate its own procedure, appoint its own officers, enforce its own decisions, and to conduct investigations by committees.

It will be advisable to set up, in the federal machinery of government, a national economic council. This body will be set up by the legislature and will be subordinate to it. Nevertheless it should have a measure of independence in its own special domain. A modern government has to face difficult economic problems and to undertake complicated tasks which require careful thought and expert guidance. The legislature is almost always overburdened with work and cannot give sufficient time or thought to these problems, and an assembly of politicians is usually not a suitable forum of a detailed consideration of such subjects. The broad lines of policy should of course be laid down by the legislature, but the working out of this policy must be the concern of experts and those especially interested in it.

The national economic council will thus lighten the burden on the legislature and will speed up the economic development of the country. It will supervise the trading enterprises of the state, such as railways, post offices, the Reserve Bank and the like; India's foreign trade and the negotiation and conclusion of trade treaties; economic relations with foreign countries; the working of the currency and credit mechanism within the country; the care of the labour and peasant population; relations between employers and employees; the agrarian relief of indebtedness, etc. The statutory railway board set up under the Act would get absorbed in such an economic council. The constitution of the Reserve

Bank may have to be radically revised, especially in regard to the bank's functions, in order to make it conform to the national economic council.

The national economic council could also be entrusted with the task of planning the economic life of the community under the general direction and supervision of the federal government. This task is a stupendous one and it may be necessary to create a special planning commission for the purpose.

This economic council will have to include representatives of the federating units, and also representatives of special interests, such as chambers of commerce or industry, agriculture, trade unions of industrial workers, peasant organisations, professional and technical associations, and scientific experts.

In the provinces there should be only one chamber representing the people of the province directly on a basis of adult franchise. It would be desirable to encourage functional representation and to prefer this, whenever possible, to territorial representation. As there will be no second or revising chamber, provision should be made for a direct referendum to the provincial electorates on certain specified matters of fundamental policy affecting the organisation of the province as a unit or other subjects which are vital to the life of the province. If the method of referendum is adopted, the constitution will have to provide for the minimum majority necessary to carry out a fundamental change of policy.

It will perhaps be unnecessary and uneconomical to begin with to have an economic council in the province corresponding with the federal economic council. It is desirable to avoid needless additions to the wheels of government machinery. But with the speedy development of our economic life and large-scale planning, a provincial counterpart to the national economic council may become necessary. This provincial economic council, when it comes into being, should cooperate and coordinate its activities with the federal council.

The provincial cabinet will be, we need hardly add, fully responsible to the legislature.

However carefully the functions of government are divided by the constitution between the central federal government and the various constituent units of the federation, there must remain a good deal of common ground in regard to which the authority of the federal and provincial governments may develop. There may also be an undistributed field of residual powers and functions which cannot be foreseen at the moment the constitution is framed. Life is ever-changing and dynamic, more so in the present age than ever before, and new problems are

constantly arising owing to advances in science and technology and because of other reasons. Even human habits and modes of life are undergoing rapid changes. Specific provisions must therefore be made in the constitution to meet such contingencies.

We have already suggested that the federal upper house should be constituted the guardian of the rights of federating units. This house should also have authority to deal with conflicts over the undistributed field of residual powers and functions. In the event of a dispute arising as to what constitutes undistributed and residual powers, the supreme court should be given the power to decide. It should be open to both the federal and the provincial governments to move the supreme court in a dispute of this kind.

Some of the provisions in the Act of 1935, regulating the relations of the centre to the provinces, might well be retained. Section 102 of the Act authorising the federal legislature to legislate for a province in an emergency; section 103, empowering the federal legislature to legislate for two or more provinces by mutual consent; and section 104, disposing of the residual powers of legislature, are such provisions which it is desirable to retain.

The provisions of sections 122 to 135 of the Act of 1935 offer a good model for the regulation of administrative relations between the federation and the federating units. But the final authority in such cases should vest in the supreme court or the federal upper house.

In matters of finance, an effort should be made to have as complete a division of the resources and obligations as is possible under the circumstances. But, even so, an absolutely water-tight division cannot be achieved. Provisions like those contained in sections 137, 138, 140, 142 and 144 of the Act of 1935 may be re-enacted in the new constitution. Under present conditions, the provisions about borrowing in the Act of 1935 seem unobjectionable. But borrowing for directly productive purposes, or for taking over an already productive enterprise, on the security of such enterprise, should be freely permitted.

Provincial governments will have to explore the possibilities of new and additional sources of revenue. It is difficult to make concrete suggestions in this respect till further experience has been gained. The National Congress has already advocated the imposition of a graded tax on incomes from land, as well as death duties. An income tax on land should bring in a considerable revenue, especially in the permanently settled areas.

There should be a supreme court for India having the final appellate authority in all matters. The power to interpret the constitution must also vest in this court. Apart from this, the only original jurisdiction

of the supreme court should be to try high-placed offenders charged with offences involving a violation of the constitution. In such cases the court should be debarred from accepting the plea of "act of state" by way of justification.

The combination of judicial and executive functions should be forthwith abolished.

The scale of salaries of judges, as of other high officers, will have to be considerably reduced from the present very high scale. But the independence of the judiciary may be guaranteed by their salaries, allowances, pensions, etc., being regarded as in the nature of consolidated fund charges, which are not subjected annually to the vote of the legislature at the time of the budget.

Judges should be appointed during good behaviour and may be removable from office on proof of any default in their duties or for bodily or mental disability or infirmity. When such action becomes necessary, the authority to move in the matter should be the legislature of the province or of the federation, as the case may be. This legislature should present an address to the executive head requesting him to remove the judge from his office.

Judicial authority should be empowered and directed to maintain the fundamental rights and civil liberties guaranteed by the constitution.

The final test of the independence of a nation is the capacity to defend itself from external invasion or interference. If, therefore, India is to be independent, she must be in a position to repel foreign aggression and to quell internal commotion through her own resources and without any outside help. She must therefore provide herself with armed forces sufficient for this purpose, as well as with well-developed industries to supply the munitions and accessories of warfare. Warfare is becoming more and more mechanised, and it is a well-known fact that no nation, which has not got a sufficiently developed industrial background, can hope to carry on a war effectively for any length of time. A non-industrial nation can thus hardly be called independent, as it is not in a position to defend itself for long against aggression.

The defence of India has, at the instance of the British Government and its officers in India, usually been considered from an entirely wrong angle. Most Indian politicians are too much occupied with the political and economic aspects of the Indian struggle for freedom, to consider the technicalities of defence. A certain mystery surrounds this and Indians are told that they do not and cannot understand it. Fantastic threats are held out of possible invasions by foreign forces, if the British retire, and we are told that our lives and property are only safe because of British protection. Our lack of trained officers, the inevitable result

of long-continued British policy in India, is made the excuse for continuing British officers in large numbers. A considerable British army remains permanently in India and can only be looked upon as an army of occupation. The Arms Act has not only prevented the people from keeping arms or even knowing the use of them, but has also created a psychological background of weakness and want of self-reliance.

The problem of defence is usually considered from two points of view in India: Indianisation and reduction of the heavy expenditure on the defence forces. Both are important, for an Indian army or navy or air force must be Indian and not foreign, and the present scale of expenditure is excessive and too great a burden on the state. But what is still more important is the policy underlying the defence organisation of the country. Today the armed forces in India cannot be correctly called the defence forces of India They are not primarily meant for the defence of India from foreign aggression, but rather for the defence of the British Empire in India and outside, as well as for the holding of the Indian people in check. The army, navy and air force in India are thus organised and built up for a three-fold objective: to protect British imperial interests in India from external invasion and to take aggressive action beyond the frontiers of India in furtherance of these interests, to suppress internal activities and movements which may threaten these interests, and to provide a training ground for the British army. The interests of India and of the Indian people hardly come into the picture and if occasionally they do so, it is only incidentally. Usually there is a conflict between the two, and inevitably British interests prevail. The 'forward policy' in the North West Frontier is an imperial policy which is neither in the interests of India nor of the border tribes, and yet the tremendous burden of it falls on India, and our neighbours, with whom we wish to live in friendship and cooperation, are filled with hostility against us.

Indian troops have frequently been sent abroad in furtherance of British imperial interests and India has been made an unwilling party to British wars. The National Congress has protested against this and declared that India can be no party to such wars. As we write, Indian troops are being sent to Shanghai, where a Sino-Japanese war is raging. It is stated that these troops are being sent to protect Indian interests in China, but everybody knows that there are hardly any Indian interests there and the troops are meant to protect British interests. These troops are being sent without any previous reference to or approval of the representatives of the people, and indeed against their declared wishes. In view of the international situation, there is grave danger of

India being entangled, as a kind of camp-follower of the British, in British wars for the furtherance of British imperialist interests.

We cannot therefore consider the organisation of our defence forces in terms of present policy. That policy will have to be fundamentally altered and based on dissociation from any imperialism and on friendship with our neighbours. It will have to consider Indian interests only. A free India cannot tolerate foreign armies within its territories in any shape or form or for any purpose. Foreign officers can only remain for a transitional period as experts to train our men.

The department of defence must be entirely a federal concern, administered directly by the federal government. The constitution should expressly provide that no other authority, whether a provincial government or state, should have any defence forces of its own. To maintain the principle of the supremacy of the civil over the military authority of the state, a member of the federal council of ministers should be in charge of the department of defence and the federal ministry as a whole will be responsible for it. This ministry, in its turn, will be responsible to the federal legislature.

The modern apparatus for defence and warfare is highly mechanised and real strength in defence will depend far more on highly trained units and in proper air, naval and land equipment than in large numbers of men under arms. Vast conscript armies are apt to become a burden in modern warfare and to reduce the mobility and effectiveness of our forces; mechanisation, and indeed every kind of warfare today, requires, as we have stated above, a highly developed basic industry.

The organisation for defence should therefore be based on a relatively small, but highly trained and mechanised army with an effective naval arm and a strong and well organised air force. We do not view conscription with favour and we do not think that any necessity for it will arise, as there is a vast reservoir of manpower in India and voluntary recruitment will serve our purpose. But unforeseen emergencies and crises might arise, and we think therefore that the constitution should empower the federal government to provide for conscription for national defence if a grave national emergency demands it.

In addition to the regular army, there should be a militia which would be our second line of defence and which would form a large reservoir for the regular army, navy and air force.

We might mention here another matter which is not directly connected with defence. Although we do not wish to encourage military conscription, we would welcome labour conscription of the entire citizenship of the country for building public works and performing social service for a fixed period. We think that this would have great value

in disciplining our people, in teaching them cooperative habits, in improving the national physique and standards of health, and in raising the dignity of labour. This would also have some value in the general scheme of defence.

There is enough and more of fine material in India to build up a powerful defence organisation. The Indian soldier can compete with any other soldier. The only lack that we suffer from today is that of superior officers. We are convinced that the material for this is also good and easily available; as soon as we are in a position to do so, we shall take rapid steps to fill this gap. This does not mean just a carrying on, with perhaps greater speed, of what is called Indianisation. That word has a curious sound and strange implications. Almost, it would appear, that we were outsiders and aliens trying to encroach on another's property and preserve. It is not just an increasing Indianisation that we aim at, but the complete nationalisation of our defence forces. They will then be manned by our nationals, subject to national control, filled with the national spirit, and meant for the advancement of the national interest. The change will thus be not one of degree but of kind.

The British army of occupation in India will inevitably have to go from India, for its presence is incompatible with Indian freedom. Foreign officers will be required in India for some time as experts to train our people. But they must fit in with our scheme and must be subject to the control of our federal department of defence. The Arms Act will have to go.

It will probably be desirable to have a council of national defence appointed by the federal government. This would correlate the various activities for defence and would keep in touch with the national transport system.

The reduction in the present very heavy cost of the defence forces in India is a major item in the national programme. That reduction will come automatically with the removal of the British army from India and the reduction of the British element in the Indian army. Our expenditure in other ways also, based on national standards, will be considerably less. Even where an additional expense is involved in new undertakings, these enterprises and undertakings will have a social and an educational value for our people.

India will have an absolutely free hand in conducting her foreign relations, in making treaties and alliances for trade or other purposes, and in declaring war or peace. All these foreign relations will be in charge of the federal government which will appoint its diplomatic agents and representatives in other countries and to foreign governments as well as

to any international or supra-national organisations that might be formed. The general policy governing India's foreign policy will be to promote friendship with our neighbours and other countries, and world peace based on an equitable and progressive world order. Just as India will not permit any aggression on her own territories or interests, she will deliberately avoid all aggression on others.

We have endeavoured in the above paragraphs to indicate what in our opinion the general character of a federal constitution for India should be. We have not discussed this constitution in any detail, but the broad outlines of the completed picture are visible. This constitution for India is vastly different from the present one, especially in its federal aspects; there is another background and the objective aimed at is entirely different. And yet the suggestions we have made are all capable of being acted upon, even under present conditions, if the obstructions of vested interests in the way are once removed. We realise that this is a big if, but big things are happening in the world today, and India cannot remain static in a changing world. The social and economic problems that India has to solve are stupendous; she can only approach them with any hope of success with her hands and feet freed from the ropes of imperialist interests and feudal traditions. Complete political and economic freedom is essential for the solution of these problems.

The constitution that has been suggested is essentially a democratic one. This is in keeping with the national demand for a free democratic state. We have indicated above, however, that we consider a reconstruction of the existing social system as essential for the well-being of our people and for the ending of the conflicts that oppress society today. The constitution should therefore be so framed as to make such a change-over possible democratically and to encourage the socialisation of society. There should be no restrictions in the constitution on this change. Whether such a complete change-over is possible through the democratic process alone, it is difficult to say, in view of what is happening in the world today. But the attempt must be made.

9. Despatch of Indian Troops to China[1]

The despatch of Indian troops to Shanghai by the British Government is a matter of the gravest import and concern to India.[2] This has been done in continuation of the old policy of using Indian troops abroad without any reference to the wishes of the Indian people. That policy has been condemned by the Congress which has declared emphatically that India cannot permit her armies and peoples to be exploited to her own disadvantage and for the benefit of British imperialism.

It is stated that Indian troops have been sent to Shanghai to protect Indian interests there. What these Indian interests are few people seem to know and it is manifest that the interests to be protected are British imperial interests. And even if Indian interests have to be protected, it is for the Indian people to decide what steps should be taken. The sending of Indian troops, therefore, without the consent of the Indian people is thus an affront to India. Though by itself it might be a small matter, it is a thin end of the wedge and might lead us to all manner of unforeseen entanglements. It might indeed lead us unwittingly to war.

The Congress has repeatedly warned us of the danger of war and declared its opposition to the participation of India in any imperialist war. This was no empty warning but a declaration made after full consideration of the grave issues involved. By that declaration and warning the Congress stands. The world is drifting helplessly to a state of continuous conflict. The Spanish struggle has continued for over a year and there is no sign of its ending. The Sino-Japanese war, begun in the modern way without any declaration, but with bombs bringing destruction and death to thousands, may last, it is said, for years. Wars begin but do not end easily. They spread and consume other countries. This is the world prospect before us and the possibility of an international conflagration threatens to overwhelm humanity. How shall we face this crisis of history? Not surely as camp followers of imperialist Britain, being ordered about to fight her battles and preserve her interests.

In our preoccupations with our provincial governments and our domestic problems, grave as they are, we may not forget this mighty thing

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 25 August 1937. *The Hindu,* 26 August 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India,* (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 273-275.
2. The government *communique* said that Indian troops had been sent to Singapore and Hong Kong for the protection of British and Indian nationals.

that overshadows the world and might upset, in one great sweep, all our schemes and planning. That is the major issue before India, as before all other countries, and in a decision as to how to face it, the people of India will have their say and it is their wishes that must count. Congressmen must be vigilant to this end; not to be so is to invite disaster.

Therefore India must protest against this despatch of troops to China. In the Far Eastern conflict our sympathies are inevitably with China, and we wish her people success in maintaining their freedom against imperialist aggression. But in this international game we cannot allow our manpower and resources to be used as pawns by others. Today we can protest only, but that protest will have the full strength of the Congress behind it if this policy continues.

10. To Asaf Ali[1]

Allahabad
26.8.1937

Dear Asaf Ali,

Your letter of the 4th August reached me in Wardha. Other members of the Working Committee also received copies of your letter. I had not mentioned this matter to anyone, nor was it my intention to bring it up before them. But it was as well that you wrote to them.

My object in writing my last letter[2] to you was that certain phrases in your circular to the Premiers were capable of being interpreted in a way which might have been injurious to the Congress position. I see now that those phrases had a certain history behind them. I have no doubt that you did not mean to say anything which might tone down the Congress objective in this matter. But as the sentences appeared ambiguous, I wrote to you.

This matter of the army, I feel, is one on which no such ambiguity should be allowed to flourish. As you know the international position is full of difficulty and all manner of complications might arise. Take for instance the recent despatch of Indian troops to China. I feel that the Congress position should be maintained in its clarity. This position, as I understand it, is this: all British troops must be withdrawn from India without any qualification whatever. The Indian army should not

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P.L. 16/1937, p. 21, N.M.M.L.
2. See *ante*, pp. 589-590.

be used for any warlike purposes or any purposes abroad without the previous consent of the Indian people. Further that India is not prepared to join any imperialist war waged by Britain. Any language that might appear to tone down our position will be taken advantage of by our opponents. It was for this reason that I wrote to you previously.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

11. On the Hunger Strike of the Andaman Prisoners[1]

I do not remember anything in recent years that has exercised the mind and moved the heart of India so much as the fate of the political prisoners in the Andamans consequent on their hunger strike. The whole of the country has been deeply stirred and all manner of people, even outside the ranks of the politicians, have raised their voices in sympathy for human suffering and in protest against a grievous wrong. Everybody knows that this sympathy is not for violent activity, and most of us do not approve of the weapon of a hunger strike to right a wrong. And yet there is this enormous, deep and widespread feeling for our countrymen in the Andamans. Almost one can hear the heart of India beating and feel the pulse quickening at the thought of this grim tragedy that is being enacted. It is not so much the individuals that matter. It is as if a limb of the nation was in pain and the whole body suffered for it.

And yet the Government of India has decreed that they are not prepared to give any consideration to the prisoners' demands. Surely it would be a difficult task to find another instance where the government of a country was so alien in thought and feeling and action to the people of that country. Even despots bow to popular will, but not so the Government of India under the new constitution. The gap that separates the people of India from the British Government is unmeasurable and unbridgeable. Perhaps even this tragedy that is being enacted before our eyes has served a good purpose if it makes us realise the true

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 29 August 1937. *The Leader*, 31 August 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 283-284.

nature of this gap and of the illusion of power that the new constitution is supposed to give us.

The provincial governments, whose prisoners are in the Andamans, are powerless in the matter. Many of them, it is well known, have asked for the repatriation of these prisoners. But they ask in vain. This raises important constitutional issues, but more important than this is the human issue, overriding political barriers. The humanity of India has been outraged and the British Government have dared to treat it as of no consequence. But India will remember this challenge and will give her answer.

12. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
August 30, 1937

My dear Krishna,

I have to acknowledge receipt of your letters dated 4th, 7th and 27th August. I have already acknowledged receipt of other letters. You can find out from your file if any, that you have sent, have so far not been acknowledged by me. If so, they are probably missing.

You say something about the Indian trade delegation[2] in one of your letters. This delegation, I take it, represents big business here and as such behaves as big business always does. To some extent it may exploit nationalism for its purpose. I know nothing of what has been done there and so I cannot say. It is not obvious that any agreement that may be arrived at will necessarily be accepted here. But Congress opposition in the Central Assembly is weak and acts still more weakly. Still if there are any obvious defects in the agreement and it means the tightening of the imperial bond, we shall try to criticise and oppose it to that extent.

About the meeting of the council of the International Peace Congress at Geneva on the 13th September, you should certainly attend if you can manage it. You should attend all such important meetings of the International Peace Congress on behalf of the Congress.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. A delegation had been sent to England to conclude a new agreement to replace that concluded in 1932, after the Ottawa agreement.

Some time back I learnt that you were having a conference on civil liberties in India on the 17th October. Is this fixed up and do you wish me to do anything in regard to it?

I now come to your proposal for a mass demonstration on India on the 24th October in Trafalgar Square. It is a good idea if you can bring it about. As regards Congress flags, it may be possible to send you some from here. You have not given me any idea of how many you require and of the size they should be. Probably I shall send you a few samples with Indira. Unfortunately our flags are not made properly on a mass scale. Something of this kind is being thought of now but it will take a little time.

About portrait banners with likenesses of Indian leaders, I do not quite know how you are going to prepare these banners. We have hardly any of the kind here. I see no objection in principle to your displaying pictures of some leading Congressmen who are ministers. However, this need not be overdone. I do not know which of the leaders you intend to honour in this way.

You can certainly write a letter to the press on this subject and send it to our office here. We shall give it publicity. So far Lohia has not heard from you on this subject.

So far as I know there are not many special banners of the various progressive movements in India. Many trade unions have just a red flag, sometimes with the hammer and sickle on it.

Would it be possible for you to get the flags made there if we send you suitable khadi for the purpose? Of course the flags must be of khadi, whether silk or cotton. Silk is expensive. If you could get them printed there on the stuff we send, it would be probably cheaper and more effective. If you approve of this idea, you must let me or Lohia know how much of this stuff you would require.

The making of gramophone records rather frightens me. I have been repeatedly asked by gramophone companies, both foreign and Indian, for such records. One foreign company, I think it is the Columbia, made a record in London of a speech from Gandhiji. These people have given a lot of trouble and have not fulfilled the financial part of their arrangements. Partly this was due to the fact that civil disobedience having taken place they could not sell their records in India as the government intervened. That particular record, as a matter of fact, dealt with some religious topic.

Last year I agreed to make a record in English and one in Hindustani for a new Indian company.[3] They were not great successes but I

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 597-598.

believe they are on the market. I do not suppose they will be very suitable for foreign consumption, nor are they technically good, but I shall try to send the English one to you with Indira.

This recording business was one of the most exhausting processes that I have had to undergo. It sounds simple, just twelve minutes. As a matter of fact, I must have spent about three hours in a wretched studio, on a hot stuffy day, in Bombay when even the fans were not allowed to work, as they interfered with the recording.

Although I do not look forward to a repetition of this experience, I might make the attempt if you are keen. Probably the best place to do it would be Bombay or some other big city.

During the last year I have on three occasions made little talkies. These have been in Hindustani. The first one was banned by the government although it was very innocuous.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

13. To Mrs. Duncan Harris[1]

Allahabad
September 2, 1937

Dear Mrs. Harris,[2]
I am grateful to you for your letter of July 16th. We welcome and appreciate greatly the good wishes of the Women's International League. As you are no doubt aware our national movement stands for the removal of all disqualifications that women suffer from and all the hindrances that have been put in their way by law or custom. It has long been our proposal to incorporate this as a kind of fundamental right in the Indian constitution.

You are perfectly right in thinking that the real struggle for Indian freedom is still to come. This struggle, we are convinced, is not an isolated phenomenon, but is a part of the world struggle. In these days when uncertainty prevails all over the world about the future, and the

1. A.I.C.C. File No. F.D.-7/1936, p. 245, N.M.M.L.
2. Chairman of the British section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

chances of international war increase, it is well that those who stand for peace and freedom should cooperate with each other.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

14. To Sri Prakasa[1]

Allahabad
2.9.1937

My dear Prakasa,

Your letter of August 31st. As the money is not sufficient for three wells, you would better have two only.

Bhulabhai and Satyamurti's attitude regarding the sending of Indian troops to China distressed me greatly.[2] The other day a German journalist came to see me and he said how astonished he had been to read the statement of Bhulabhai and Satyamurti.

About the Federal Court Bill,[3] I am afraid I know nothing about it. But I suspect that it has elements of danger in that it means accepting a bit of the federation. I wonder if you could send me a note on this which would inform me of the position.

I am afraid you will have to stick on to the Central Assembly till something happens. We all have to stick on. My position is surely difficult enough.

I am going to Bombay on the 7th to see Indira off. From there I shall go to Gujarat and expect to return by the 19th.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-20/1937, p. 213, N.M.M.L.
2. In a statement issued on 21 August 1937 they said that they had no objection if Indian troops were used for protection of Indian nationals abroad but in case of their employment in the Sino-Japanese war their "sympathy will be with those against whom aggressive imperial encroachment is being carried out under one excuse or other."
3. The bill proposed to confer upon the federal court the power to exercise jurisdiction more effectively over the courts in the provinces. Opposing the bill in the Central Assembly, Sri Prakasa said: "with the help of this bill. . .government is merely trying to get our consent indirectly to its scheme of federation and I am sorry to find that various persons who really ought to know better, are being caught in the net."

15. To Bhulabhai Desai[1]

Bombay
September 12, 1937

My dear Bhulabhai,

I have been wanting to write to you for some time past about the despatch of Indian troops to China. When I saw the statement that you and Satyamurti issued, I was somewhat distressed. This was more because of the implications of the statement than of what it actually contained. I had no knowledge, of course, at the time and I have yet no knowledge as to the background of the statement and what had happened behind the scenes in the matter. After a few days there were so many inquiries about it addressed to me and complaints, and I felt also that this despatch of troops was full of risk and danger for us, that I decided to issue a statement which you must have seen.[2] Since then I have had letters from England and press cuttings which go to show that it has been generally taken for granted that the Congress has agreed to the despatch of these troops. It seems to me that this will lead to complications and great confusion in the public mind both in India and in England. The matter is likely to come up before the International Peace Conference at Geneva and I have written to them protesting against this despatch of troops.[3]

The situation between China and Japan is becoming progressively worse and there is considerable danger of developments in Europe also. It seems to me that we have to be very much on our guard and to lose no opportunity to declare that we shall have nothing to do with wars and the like which Britain may wage. Our attitude will not merely be a negative one but perhaps an active one in terms of the Congress resolution on war danger.[4] In a day or two I propose to issue a statement[5] suggesting the holding of protest demonstrations on the China issue on a fixed day.

There is the Abyssinia matter also. We can do little about it. But still I think we should clearly express our views, whenever possible, in

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P.L. 16/1937, p. 89, N.M.M.L.
2. See pp. 611-612.
3. Jawaharlal, in fact, had written to Krishna Menon. See *post*, section 13, item 13.
4. The resolution passed at the Lucknow Congress in 1936 said that India cannot be made a party to an imperialist war without the consent of her people and any attempt to involve her would be resisted. It also disapproved of war preparations being made in the country to create an atmosphere of war.
5. See *post*, section 13, item 19.

regard to the British Government's attitude to kick Abyssinia out from the League. They tried to do this at the last League meeting but a number of small nations managed to shout loud enough to prevent them. Jordon of the New Zealand delegation played an important part in opposing the British deal. The matter is likely to come up again before the League in a few days' time. I suppose the so-called representatives of India will support Britain under instructions from their bosses. I have therefore communicated with Jordon telling him that the National Congress is entirely opposed to any recognition of Italy's aggressive action in Abyssinia or to the removal of Abyssinia from the League.[6]

I am going to Gujarat tonight with Vallabhbhai for a five days' tour. After that I go to Ajmer for a day and then to Allahabad.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

6. Jawaharlal cabled, "National Congress strongly supports continuation Ethiopian delegation League. Interests peace demand no recognition aggression Ethiopia China."

16. To Carl Heath[1]

Allahabad
October 7, 1937

Dear Mr. Heath,
Thank you for your letter of September 15th.[2] I appreciate the frankness with which you have written to me. May I say that I agree with you in much that you have written and I realise the dangers that beset us?

I can assure you that I shall put no obstruction in the way of a meeting with Lord Linlithgow.[3] Some time back I felt a little differently when the Andaman hunger strike was on. During the continuation of

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. He wrote: "Once your Indian princes and their federal legislative nominees are entrenched it will be a far bigger job and in this fight you may conceivably be driven to some kind of revolutionary action. I hope not. But if so you will have a very difficult India to deal with—all the India of privilege and power, which values the *status quo* above all considerations. . . ."
3. Heath had suggested that Jawaharlal should meet the Viceroy.

that strike I did not feel like meeting the Viceroy who was certainly partly responsible for the policy towards the Andaman prisoners.

There is no chance of my going to Europe this year. But I am thinking and hoping that next summer I might be able to go for a while.

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

17. The Unity of India[1]

Most Americans, bred up in the democratic tradition, sympathise with the struggle for freedom in India. They dislike empire and imperialism and domination and exploitation of one nation by another. And yet they hesitate and are perplexed at the problem of India, and they wonder if it is possible to build up a united and progressive nation out of the seemingly infinite diversity that makes up the fabric of Indian life. They have heard so much of the separatist elements, of the conflicts of religion and culture, of the variety of languages, of the medieval conditions in the semi-feudal regions of the Indian states, of social cleavages, of the general backwardness of Indian life, that doubts assail them whether it is possible to harmonise all these in a free and independent India. Can democracy be built up on these insecure foundations? Can India stand together and free if British rule was withdrawn?

These hesitations and perplexities are natural and the doubts and questions that give rise to them must be considered by us dispassionately and an attempt made to find answers. Freedom for a nation and a people may be, and is, I believe, always good in the long run; but in the final analysis, freedom itself is a means to an end, that end being the raising of those people to higher levels and the general advancement of humanity. In India the vital and most important problem that faces us is the appalling poverty of the people. Will political independence help us to get rid of this as well as of the numerous ills that flow from it?

1. Allahabad, 8 October 1937. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. First printed in *Foreign Affairs*, January 1938, and reprinted with a few changes in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 11-26.

It is well to remember that the British have been in effective control of India for more than a hundred and fifty years and during this period they have had almost complete freedom to act in any manner they chose. There was no democratic or any other kind of control, the British Parliament being too far away and too ignorant to intervene. India was, and is, a rich country, rich in her agricultural resources, her mineral wealth, her human material; only her people are poor. It was indeed the wealth of India that attracted hordes of foreign adventurers to her shores. With these resources and material and a century and a half of unchecked despotism, one is entitled to ask for substantial results. During this period Europe has changed out of recognition, Japan has transformed herself up with an amazing speed, America has become the most advanced and the wealthiest country in the world. But in India we have this grinding poverty, and widespread illiteracy, and general absence of sanitation and medical relief, and a lack of all the good things of life. There are undoubtedly some good works which have followed British rule, notably in irrigation, but how little they are compared to what might have been! It is idle to blame the people for this when those people were allowed no say in the matter. The very backwardness of a people is a condemnation of the government. With this patent result of British rule in India, little argument is needed to demonstrate its failure. But even admitting its failure, it is true that our present problems are no nearer solution. Yet it is well to bear this in mind, for the very structure of British imperialist rule has been, and is, such as to aggravate all our problems and not to solve any of them. And because these problems insistently demand solution, we have to look for it outside the orbit of the British Empire.

India is smaller than the United States of America, yet it is a vast country in size, and in population it is far larger than the U.S.A. Our problems therefore are continental, unlike those of the small countries of Europe. Till the advent of modern communications and modern methods of transport, it was very difficult for such a vast area to hold together politically for long. The U.S.A. have grown and developed into a powerful unit, despite their vast area, because of this development in transport and communication. If the U.S.A. had a past history, going back hundreds and thousands of years before modern science and industry revolutionised life, it is exceedingly probable that they would have been split up into many small national units, as in Europe. If India has been split up politically in the course of her long history, it was inevitable under the then existing conditions. Yet always the idea of the political unity of India persisted and kings and emperors sought to realise it. Asoka indeed achieved it two thousand years ago and built

up an empire far greater than that of Britain in India today. This empire stretched right into Central Asia and included Afghanistan. Only a tiny tip in south India remained outside it, and this because of the horror of war and bloodshed that came over Asoka in the full flood of victory and conquest. Many another ruler in the past tried to achieve the political unification of India and succeeded in some measure. But this desire for a unified political control of the whole country could not be realised as the means and machinery were lacking. The coming of the British to India synchronised with the development in transport, communications and modern industry, and so the British rule succeeded at last in establishing the political unity of India.

This desire for political unity, in India as in other countries before the advent of nationalism, was usually the desire of the ruler or the conqueror, and not of the people as a whole. In India, where for long ages there was a large measure of local self-government, the people were far more interested in their local freedom and rights than in the machinery of government at the top. Kings changed at the top but the newcomer respected these local rights and did not interfere with them. Because of this, conflicts between kings and people did not take place as in Europe, and later under cover of this kings gradually built up their autocratic power.

An all-India political unity was thus not possible in the past, but what is far more important for us is to see what other more basic unifying or separatist features there were in Indian life. This will help us to understand the present and shape the future. Superficial observers of India, accustomed to the standardisation which modern industry has brought about in the West, are apt to be impressed too much by the variety and diversity of India. They miss the unity of India, and yet the tremendous and fundamental fact of India is her essential unity throughout the ages. Indian history runs into thousands of years, and, of all modern nations, only China has this continuous and ancient background of culture. Five to six thousand years ago the Indus Valley civilisation flourished all over northern India and probably extended to the south also, and even then it was highly developed with millenia of growth behind it. From that early dawn of history innumerable peoples, conquerors and settlers, pilgrims and students, have trekked into the Indian plains from the highlands of Asia, and they have influenced Indian life and culture and art, but always they have been absorbed and assimilated by India. India changed by these contacts and yet she remained essentially her own old self; like the ocean she received the tribute of a thousand rivers, and though she was disturbed often enough and storms raged over the surface of her waters, the sea continued to be the sea.

It is astonishing to note how India continued successfully this process of assimilation and adaptation. It could only do so if the idea of a fundamental unity was so deep-rooted as to be accepted even by the newcomer, and if this culture was flexible and adaptable to changing conditions.

Vincent Smith[2] in his *Oxford History of India* refers to this: "India, beyond all doubt, possesses a deep underlying unity, far more profound than that produced either by geographical isolation or by political suzerainty. That unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, colour, language, dress, manners, and sect."

Sir Frederick Whyte[3] in *The Future of East and West* also stresses this unity. He refers to the tremendous diversity of India and yet "the greatest of all the contradictions in India is that over this diversity is spread a greater unity, which is not immediately evident because it failed historically to find expression in any political cohesion to make the country one, but which is so great a reality, and so powerful, that even the Mussulman world of India has to confess that it has been deeply affected by coming within its influence."

This background and unity were essentially cultural; they were not religious in the narrow sense of the word. That culture was not exclusive or intolerant to begin with; it was receptive and adaptable, and long ages of pre-eminence gave it deep roots and a solidity which storms could not shake. It developed an aristocratic attitude which, secure in its own strength, could afford to be tolerant and broad-minded. And this very toleration gave it greater strength and adaptability. There was in it, till almost the beginning of the Christian era, a certain rationalism, something approaching a scientific outlook, which refused to tie itself down to dogmas. True, this culture and rationalism were largely confined to the upper classes, but they percolated down to the masses to some extent. Superstitions and dogmas and many an evil practice gradually crept in. Buddhism was a revolt against these. But the old way of life was still powerful, and it is one of the wonders of history how India succeeded in absorbing Buddhism without any physical conflict. Buddhism, which had spread throughout India, and had made progress from Western Asia right across Central Asia to the Far East,

2. (1848-1920); British civil servant and historian; author of several books on Indian history, numismatics, art and archaeology.
3. (1883-1970); president, Indian Legislative Assembly, 1920-25; political adviser to the national government of China, 1929-32; author of *Asia in the Twentieth Century*, *China and Foreign Powers* and *The Future of East and West*.

gradually faded out of the land of its birth. The man who is supposed to be largely responsible for this was Shankaracharya, who lived in the eighth century after Christ. This amazingly brilliant young man travelled all over India, arguing, debating, convincing large audiences, and in a few years (he died at the age of 32) changed the mental atmosphere of the country. The appeal was to reason and logic, not to force.

This practice of debate and conference over religious and other matters was common all over India and there are records of many great gatherings from Kashmir in the north to the far south. Whatever the political divisions of the country, ideas spread rapidly all over the land and were hotly debated. India hung together culturally and the mental background of the people everywhere was much the same. Even the masses in different parts of the country were not dissimilar in thought and outlook. The chief places of pilgrimage fixed by Shankaracharya were situated at the four corners of India: Badrinath in the Himalayas in the north, Rameswaram near Cape Comorin in the south, Dwarka in the west overlooking the Arabian Sea, and Puri in the east, washed by the waters of the Bay of Bengal. Thus there was continuous intercourse between the peoples of the different parts of India. India as a whole was their holy land.

It is interesting to compare the intolerance of Europe in matters religious to the wide tolerance prevailing almost throughout history in India. Christianity came to India in the first century after Christ, long before Europe knew much about it, and found a welcome and a home. There was no opposition whatever. Even now there are many early Christian sects flourishing in India, which were crushed out of existence in Europe. There are the Nestorians, and various Syrian Christian sects. The Jews came to India also about eighteen hundred years ago or more and were welcomed. They still live their community life and parts of an ancient city where they live are supposed to resemble old Jerusalem. The Zoroastrians also came to India, driven out from Persia, and made their home here, and have flourished ever since. The Muslims came first very soon after the advent of Islam and they found ready admittance and welcome and full opportunities of propagating their faith. For centuries there was no conflict except on the frontiers; it was only when Muslims came as conquerors and raiders that there was conflict.

The coming of Muslim rule shook India. For a while there was a conflict between the old background and the new, but soon the old spirit of India began to assert itself and attempts began to be made to find a synthesis of the old and the new. Even in religion, most difficult

subject of all, this attempt was repeatedly made, by Nanak,[4] Kabir,[5] and others. The Muslim rulers generally accepted the background of Indian life and culture, varied by Persian cultural ideas. There was no difficulty whatever in the adaptation of old Indian arts to new ideas. New styles grew up in architecture and painting which were truly a synthesis of the two and yet were essentially Indian. So also in music. Even in dress a certain uniformity crept in, and a common language developed.

Thus the whole history of India for thousands of years past shows her essential unity and the vitality and adaptability of her culture. This vitality took her message in art and thought and religion to the Far East, it took the shape of great colonizing expeditions to Malaysia, to Java and Sumatra and the Philippines and Borneo, and the remains of great monuments there, a thousand years old, bear testimony to it.

Behind this cultural unity, and giving strength to it, was the ceaseless attempt to find a harmony between the inner man and his outer environment. To some extent this was the medieval outlook of the Middle Ages in Europe, and yet it was probably something more. The profit motive was not so obvious and riches were not valued in the same way as elsewhere. Unlike Europe, honour was reserved for the man of intellect and the man who served the state or society, and the great soldier or the rich man took second and third place. Perhaps it was this want of stress on the outer environment that made India politically weak and backward, when external progress was so rapid in the West.

This past record of Indian cultural solidarity does not necessarily help us today, for it is present conditions that we have to deal with, and memories of what has been may be of little avail. But though that is perfectly true, yet an ancient people have deep roots in the past and we cannot ignore them. Both the good and the bad that we possess have sprung from those roots; they give us strength and inspiration, they also burden us and tie us down to many a harmful tradition and evil practice. India undoubtedly deteriorated and the vital urge in her began to lessen. Her power to assimilate and absorb became feebler, and the flexibility of her thought and structure gave place to rigidity. What was dynamic became more and more static. The rationalism and the scientific basis of her thought continued for a favoured few, but for others irrationalism and superstition held sway. Caste, which was a division of society by occupation, and which was far from rigid, developed a fearful rigidity and became the citadel of social reaction and

4. (1460-1504); the first of the Sikh Gurus.

5. (1440-1518); a Muslim weaver whose songs and teachings emphasised the unity of all religions.

the exploitation of the masses. For a long time India vegetated, the strength had gone out of her, and it was inevitable that she should fall an easy prey to the better-equipped and more vital and technically advanced nations of the West.

The immediate result of this was the growth of conservatism, a further shrinking inside her shell in self-defence. British rule helped this process by crystallising many a changing custom and giving it the force of law. More important in keeping India back was the economic structure which British rule built up. The feudal Indian state system, the gilded maharajas and nawabs, and the big landlord system were essentially British creations in India. We have them, to our misfortune, still with us. But this desire of the British rulers to keep a semi-feudal structure in India could not keep back the impact of new ideas and new conditions.

The British themselves came to the East on the wave of the great impulse which the coming of industrialism gave to the world and India was inevitably affected by this impulse. For their own purposes and in order to entrench themselves, they built railways and the other accompaniments of a modern administration. They tried hard to stop the industrial growth of India, desiring to keep her as a producer of raw material only and a consumer of British manufactured goods. But the industrial revolution had to spread to India, though it came slowly because of the obstruction on the part of the government.

The British gave political unity to India. This was possible now owing to the development of communications and transport. It was a unity of a common subjection, but it gave rise to the unity of a common nationalism, and the idea of a united and free India gripped the people. It was not a superficial idea imposed from above, but the natural outcome of that fundamental unity which had been the background of Indian life for thousands of years. The difference that had crept in was the new emphasis on the political aspect. To combat this, the British Government tried to lay stress on the religious differences and adopted a policy to encourage them and bring them into conflict with each other. It has had a measure of success, but nationalism, in India as in the other countries of the East, is the dominant urge of the time and must triumph. This nationalism is being tempered today by the economic urge, but this is still further removed from the medieval outlook which thinks in terms of religious groupings in political affairs.

The growth of the powerful nationalist movement in India, represented by the National Congress, has demonstrated the political unity of India. During the last seventeen years vast upheavals, in the nature of a peaceful rebellion, have taken place throughout the length and breadth

of the country, and shaken the foundations of British rule. This voluntary organisation, commanding the willing allegiance of millions, has played a great role in fixing the idea of Indian unity in the minds of our masses. The capacity for united action and disciplined sacrifice for a national ideal which our masses have shown has demonstrated not only the probability of Indian unity but its actual existence. In India today no one, whatever his political views or religious persuasions might be, thinks in terms other than those of national unity.

There are differences of course and certain separatist tendencies, but even these do not oppose national freedom or unity. They seek to gain a special favour for their group and because of this they hinder sometimes the growth of the nationalist movement. Religious differences affect politics less and less, though still sometimes they distract attention. There is no religious or cultural problem in India. What is called the religious or communal problem is really a dispute among upper class people for a division of the spoils of office or of representation in a legislature. This will surely be settled amicably wherever it arises.

Language is supposed to divide up India into innumerable compartments and we are told by the census that there are 222 languages or dialects in India. I suppose the census of the U.S.A. mentions a very large number of languages; I think the German census mentions over sixty. But most of these languages are spoken by small groups of people or are dialects. In India owing to absence of mass education dialects have grown. As a matter of fact India is a singularly unified area, so far as languages are concerned. Altogether there are a dozen languages and these are closely allied to each other. They fall into two groups—the Indo-Aryan languages of the north and centre and west, and the Dravidian languages of the south and the east. The Indo-Aryan languages derive from Sanskrit and if one knows one of them, it is easy to learn another. The Dravidian languages are different, but each one of them contains fifty per cent or more words from the Sanskrit. The dominant language in India is Hindustani (Hindi or Urdu) which is already spoken by a huge block of a hundred and twenty million people and is partly understood by scores of millions of others. This language is bound to become the all-India medium of communication, not displacing the great provincial languages, but as a compulsory second language. With mass education on behalf of the state this will not be difficult. Already with talkies and the radio, the range of Hindustani is spreading fast. The writer of this article has had occasion to address great mass audiences all over India and almost always, except in the south, he has used Hindustani and been understood. Whatever difficult problems India has to solve, and they are many, it is clear that the

language problem is not one of them. This is already well on the way to solution.

It will thus be seen that the forces working for Indian unity are formidable and overwhelming and it is difficult to conceive of any separatist tendency which can break up this unity. Some of the major Indian princes might represent such a tendency, but they flourish not from their own inherent strength, but because of the support of the British power. When that support goes, they will have to surrender to the wishes of their own people, among whom the sentiment of national unity is widespread.

This does not mean that our problems are easy of solution. They are very difficult, as every major problem in the world today is difficult, and probably their solution will depend on international as well as on national factors. But the real problems of India, as of the rest of the world, are economic, and they are so interrelated that it is hardly possible to tackle them separately. The land problem is the outstanding question of India and without revolutionary changes in our agriculture and land system it is difficult to see any final solution of it. Feudal relics and the big landlord system are hindrances to development and will have to go. The tiny holdings, averaging a fraction of an acre per person, are uneconomic and wasteful and too small for the application of scientific methods of agriculture. Large-scale state and collective or cooperative farms must be established instead, and this cannot be done so long as the vested interests in land are not removed. Even when this is done the vast urban and rural unemployment will not be reduced. For that, as well as for other obvious reasons, we must push the industrialisation of the country. This again requires the development of social services—education, sanitation, etc. And so the problem becomes a vast many-sided one affecting land, industry and all departments of life, and it can only be tackled on a nationally planned basis with no vested interests to obstruct our planning. Therefore many of us think that a socialist structure is necessary for in no other way can such planning be organised and pushed through.

But then the vested interests come in—there lies the real difficulty and conflict. Far the greatest of these is the City of London, representing British finance and industry, and the Government of India is but a shadow of it when vital interests are concerned. There are the imperial services and Indian vested interests also, the princes and others. The new constitution in India, though giving a certain leverage in the provinces owing to the extension of the electorate, is essentially designed to protect these special interests and keep British imperialism in India intact. Even in the provinces real power rests with the Governors and

the revenues are largely mortgaged to these interests. Such strength as there is behind the provincial governments comes far more from the organised national movement than from the constitution Act. Fear of conflict with this movement, resulting possibly in the suspension of the constitution, prevents too much interference with the provincial governments. But the position is essentially unstable and conflicts are inherent in it. Besides, under the financial provisions and reservations it is not possible to undertake any really big schemes of social reform.

But the proposed federal structure is far the worst part of the constitution as it gives permanence to the feudal Indian states and, in addition, gives them some power to interfere in the affairs of the rest of India. The whole conception of a union of imperialism, feudalism and democracy is incapable of realisation and can only mean the entrenchment of all the reactionary elements in India. It must be remembered that the Indian state system is over a hundred years old and it has continued more or less unchanged during this past century. During this period Europe and the world have changed past recognition and it is a monstrous imposition that we should be permanently saddled with these feudal relics which prevent all growth. Hence the fierce opposition to the federal structure and the constitution Act as a whole.

The National Congress stands for independence and a democratic state. It has proposed that the constitution of a free India must be framed, without outside interference, by a constituent assembly elected on an adult franchise. That is the democratic way and there is no other way, short of revolution, which may bring anything in its train. An assembly elected by adult franchise will represent the people as a whole and will be far more interested in the economic and social problems of the masses than in the petty communal issues which affect small groups. Thus it will solve without much difficulty the communal and other like problems. It will not solve so easily the economic problems, but the clash of interests there is similar to that found all over the world. In the world-wide conflict of ideas and politics, India stands for democracy and against fascism and the totalitarian state. She stands for peace and cooperation between nations and ultimately the building up of a world order.

Will an independent India be strong enough to protect herself from outside aggression and invasion? If India is strong enough to gain her freedom from British imperialism, which has so long been entrenched in her soil, it seems to follow that she will also be strong enough to resist fresh aggression. The strength of a nation is a relative affair, depending on a host of internal and external factors. Most independent countries today are not strong enough to stop by themselves the

aggression of a great power. Even a great power might succumb to a combination of other powers. Probably the U.S.A. is the only country which is so fortunately situated and is so strong in every way as to resist successfully almost any hostile combination. The others depend for their independence partly on their own strength, but more so on a combination of circumstances. It is a precarious position, full of risk and danger, when world war darkens the horizon.

India will of course take all necessary steps to strengthen her defences and she has the industrial and other resources to do so. Her policy will be one of friendship to her neighbours and others and she will avoid conflict. The National Congress has already declared that in the event of Britain being involved in an imperialist war, India will not be a party to it. There is no doubt that India can build up an efficient defence apparatus. Her army today, though lacking in Indian officers, is considered an efficient force.

Who might be the aggressor against India? It is hardly likely that any European nation will embark on this rash adventure, for each country in Europe fears its neighbour. Soviet Russia, for purposes of aggression, is definitely out of the picture; she is wedded to a policy of international peace, and India fulfils no want of hers. Afghanistan and the border tribes are also out of the question. Our policy towards them will be one of close friendship and cooperation, utterly unlike the "forward policy" of the British which relies on bombing combatants and non-combatants alike. But even if they were hostile and aggressive, they are too backward industrially to meet a modern army outside their own mountains.

Japan is mentioned as a possible aggressor, and it is said that militarists in Japan dream of Asiatic and even world dominion. Perhaps so, but before they can approach India they will have to crush and absorb the whole of China, an undertaking which most people think is utterly beyond their capacity, and one which will involve at some stage conflict with other great powers. How can Japan come to India? Not overland. Deserts and the Himalayas offer an effective barrier and not even air fleets can come that way. By sea the route is long and intricate and full of danger as narrow straits have to be passed. Japan's invasion of India can only be a practical proposition if China has been completely crushed, and the U.S.A., the Soviet Union and England have been effectively humbled. That is a large undertaking.

Thus we see that normally speaking there is no great or obvious danger of external invasion. Still we live in an abnormal world, full of wars and aggression, when international law has ceased to be and treaties and undertakings have no value, and an unabashed gangsterism prevails

among nations. We realise that anything may happen in this epoch of revolution and wars, and the only thing to be done to protect oneself is to rely on one's own strength as well as to have a policy of peace. Risks have to be taken whatever the path we follow. We are prepared to take them. There is indeed no other way.

We do not underestimate the difficulties before us. We have a hard task, hard because of external opposition, harder still because of our own weaknesses. It is always more difficult to fight one's own failings than the strength of the adversary. We have to do both. We have social evils with the authority of long tradition and habit behind them. We have the elements which have gone to build up fascism in other countries. We have inertia and a tame submission to fate and its decrees. But we have also a new awakening of the vital spirit of India. The static vegetative period is over and a hunger for change and the ending of their misery and poverty has seized the masses. The world is shaken by war and alarms of war and no one knows what horror and inhuman cruelty and destruction of human progress the future holds for us. But whatever that may be, India will no longer be merely a passive instrument of destiny or of another's will.

In the sub-conscious mind of India there is much questioning, a struggle and a crisis. As of old, it seeks a synthesis of the past and the present, of the old and the new. It sees the new industrial civilisation marching irresistibly on; it distrusts it and dislikes it to some extent for it is an attack against and an upheaval of so much that is old; yet it has accepted it as an inevitable development. But still it seeks to synthesise it with its own fundamental conceptions, to find a harmony between the inner man and this ever-changing outer environment. That harmony is strangely lacking in the world today and all of us seek blindly for it, and till we find it we shall have to march wearily through the deserts of conflict and hatred and mutual destruction.

18. To Mahatma Gandhi[1]

Allahabad
November 3, 1937

My dear Bapu,
I have just spoken to Pantji on the telephone and he informs me that the situation in Cawnpore is not so bad as he had feared.[2] I am therefore staying on in Allahabad for two days and am going to Cawnpore on the 6th.

One of the Andamans' prisoners, Biswanath Mathur,[3] recently released from Hazaribagh jail, has seen me here. He was released about 10 days ago. He went to Delhi to interview B. K. Dutt, another Andamans' prisoner. Dutt, as you will remember, is well known as the companion of Bhagat Singh in the Assembly Bomb Case. In this case he was sentenced to 10 years. But subsequently he was sentenced to a life term in the conspiracy case with Bhagat Singh in Lahore. Mathur informs me that Dutt is in a very bad way. He is not only physically ill with various troubles but mentally he is in a state of extreme neurosis and desperation. He is practically in solitary confinement in Delhi, there being no other political prisoners there. Quite apart from the question of release, a suggestion was made to me that it would be a good thing if he was transferred to a Bihar jail. He would probably get better treatment there as well as companions. Also such relatives as he possesses live in Jamshedpur and he could easily have interviews with them. I understand that he has had no interview with relatives for a long time. I do not know what can be done in this matter as he is under the Delhi Government. Perhaps the Bihar Government might suggest his transfer in view of the fact that his relatives live in Bihar. I am sending a copy of this letter to Rajendra Babu.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.
2. 5,000 mill workers went on strike as a protest against alleged victimisation and the breach of the agreement reached between the millowners and the Mazdoor Sabha on 9 August 1937.
3. (b. 1914); a Congressman of Gaya; imprisoned for four years from 1933 in the Andamans for his part in the Gaya conspiracy case; later joined Communist Party.

19. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
December 20, 1937

My dear Krishna,
I returned from Assam about a week ago and I have been so frightfully busy with all manner of odd things during this period that I have been unable even to open my correspondence. This is a bad state of affairs and cannot be allowed to continue. But meanwhile I am rather at sea. I am writing briefly to you without any reference to your last letter, just to tell you that I am alive.

Lothian is here. I had a long talk with him today and we are likely to meet again. Of course he is intent on pushing federation. But men like him do not make very much difference here in spite of their able and tactful approach. Dangers come from other quarters. As a matter of fact, federation is still a far off affair and our immediate problems are overwhelming. There are many things that are happening here which distress me greatly. It is difficult even to write about them unless I write an essay. When in Assam I had a cable from Cripps and Mellor asking for an article for *The Tribune* on the present situation which seemed to them puzzling. Of course it is puzzling, though in essence it is clear. Yet it is difficult for me, holding the position I do, to write frankly on the subject at present. I have to observe a certain discipline. Probably I shall write frankly enough later. Meanwhile the Congress is nearing an internal crisis. Probably this will come to a head at the Haripura session. There are all manner of confusing problems, not the least of which is a sudden outburst of intense communalism, fanned by the Muslim League....

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

20. To Agatha Harrison[1]

Allahabad
December 23, 1937

Dear Agatha,
Forgive me for not acknowledging some of your letters. My tour in Assam cut me off completely from my correspondence and since my return I have been hard put to it to deal with the piles of letters that awaited me....

Lord Lothian is here at present and I have had two long talks with him, each extending to three hours or so. I am likely to meet him again tomorrow before he goes. The talks were of course very friendly but there was the difference in approach and in objectives....

All manner of irritating problems are cropping up here and it is difficult to say how things shape themselves during the next few months. The next Congress at Haripura is likely to be a trying affair. Apart from other considerations and purely from the personal point of view, I am looking forward greatly to being relieved of this presidentship business. It has been an exhausting thing. I do not suppose it will make very much difference so far as work and worry are concerned but it will be something to be relieved of a number of routine activities. Subhas Bose is likely to be the next President and I do not envy him the job. I hope his health will stand up to it.

With all good wishes for the New Year,

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

21. The Need for Indian Independence[1]

I welcome the demonstration organized for Indian independence in London. The independence of India has become a vital problem not only for India, but for England and the world.

1. Allahabad, 29 January 1938. Message for the demonstration for India's independence held in London on 30 January 1938. *The Hindustan Times,* 30 January 1938.

Only on the basis of this independence can the Indian problem be solved and only on this basis India can contribute her proper share for world peace. Only then can normal and friendly relations develop between India and England. To delay this inevitable solution is to add to the insecurity of the world.

India can never agree to anything short of independence, but this independence includes fullest cooperation in world order and real collective security.

It does not mean hostility to the British people, but the basis of a real cooperation for peace and human progress.

22. To Bhagavan Das[1]

Allahabad
January 31, 1938

My dear Babu Bhagavan Das,

Your letter of the 28th has just come. I hasten to reply to it though I am afraid must write hurriedly and can hardly do justice to the subject.

First of all I must point out to you that there has been no vital alteration in the old independence pledge.[2] The phrase you have drawn attention to—"India must sever the British connection"—formed part of the original 1930 pledge and has remained there ever since. In fact the whole first paragraph of the new pledge is bodily taken, without the slightest alteration, from the old pledge. The remaining paragraphs of the old pledge dealt in detail with the political, economic, cultural and spiritual injury caused to India by British rule, and finally there was an appeal for civil disobedience, which started soon afterwards with the salt laws in 1930. These remaining paragraphs have been left out now simply because we wanted to make the pledge short and concise and details were considered unnecessary at this stage. They were not left out because we disagreed with them in any way. The reference to an immediate campaign of civil disobedience was also out of place at present.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-100/1937, pp. 53-55, N.M.M.L.
2. Expressing his fear over a seeming change in the pledge decided upon by the Congress Working Committee in Bombay in January 1938, Bhagavan Das wrote to Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal: "Any sudden severance of all connection between the two countries is likely to mean tremendous turmoil and bloodshed in India."

You will thus observe that no real change has been made in the pledge. It remains as it was and as it has been repeated on countless occasions and by millions of people. I am surprised to find that you or Gandhiji should think otherwise. Gandhiji's idea that Purna Swaraj was not specified in this way is also not based on fact.[3]

The whole idea underlying 'independence' and the severance of the British connection is that we cannot have full freedom within the scope of the British group of nations, even though it might gradually change its character. There can be and there should be no complete independence in the sense of isolation from the rest of the world. But independence for us means opportunities for fuller cooperation with the other countries, including the British group. Any form of Dominion Status means our hanging on to a group which stands as a group opposed to other groups. It thus prevents real world cooperation for which we stand. The British group is by no means a progressive group and even during the last few years it has played a definitely reactionary role in world affairs. In Indian affairs it is frankly imperialistic. Why should we ally ourselves with a group which is reactionary today in the hope that it may shed its reactionary character in the future? When it gets rid of this imperialistic outlook we shall welcome it and offer it our cooperation, as we shall offer it to any other country working along right lines for world peace and order. We shall work with all our strength for the evolution of a world order.

In spite of the relative independence of the British dominions, it is Downing Street and Whitehall that determine British foreign policy, and they have determined it in a way which has encouraged reaction in Europe and elsewhere. I disapprove strongly of this policy and in no event am I going to agree to India being made a pawn in the British imperialistic game, in war or otherwise.

In the economic sphere also, India is bound hand and foot to British interests, and any form of Dominion Status that I can conceive of will protect these interests and we shall remain hangers-on of the City of London.

It is conceivable of course that all this will ultimately go. It is possible that force of circumstances will make England adopt socialism. When that happens we shall welcome it and cooperate in full measure

3. Replying to Bhagavan Das on 22 January 1938 on behalf of Mahatma Gandhi, Mahadeva Desai wrote that Mahatma Gandhi "does not think that the Working Committee has any authority to alter the pledge, for the simple reason that the pledge is based on the Congress objective of Poorna Swaraj, which has not yet been defined...."

with the new England. But why think in terms of a British group or an Indo-British group only? Why not in terms of a group of advanced nations cooperating together for the common good?

I am convinced that we cannot have any normal or peaceful relations with Britain till the imperial link is severed and India is really independent. Only then can we think in terms of forging new links with England and other countries based on a different outlook and for a different purpose. The logic of our recent history, present circumstances, as well as the possibilities of the future, point only this way. The psychological background of our struggle leads to this inevitable conclusion. I accept therefore, with all its implications, the phrase in our pledge—'sever the British connection'. Indeed I think it is the very essence of that pledge, and without it the words 'complete independence' or 'Purna Swaraj' would have little meaning.

But what is equally important is for us to remember that we are aiming at world cooperation and world order. Our independence will be a step for us in that direction.

If you so wish it, you can certainly send your letter and Gandhiji's to the press. But if you do so, I suggest that this letter of mine should be sent along with them.

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

23. To Bhagavan Das[1]

Allahabad
February 8, 1938

My dear Babu Bhagavan Das,

Your letter[2] of the 3rd February.

I hardly think that it is necessary for the Congress to reconsider this question. As a matter of fact I have discussed this matter in several statements and essays of mine, in England and in India, and made it quite clear that we shall gladly cooperate with Britain if the conditions

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-100/1937, p. 61, N.M.M.L.
2. While thanking Jawaharlal for clarifying the issue, Bhagavan Das wanted it clearly stated in the pledge that "while India must sever connection with imperialist and exploiting Britain, this does not mean complete and irreconcilable separation from Britain."

of true cooperation exist. I have also made it clear that severance of the present British connection is an essential preliminary for such cooperation. We seek a larger cooperation which might include many countries.

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

24. Rejoinder to Lord Zetland[1]

Let his Lordship note that the nineteenth century method of relying on high sounding declarations is gone by and today in the twentieth century India has gained so much in strength that it will not be allured by such offers.[2]

A federation imposed on India against her will would prove dangerous also to Britain.

1. Poona, 30 May 1938. *The Tribune*, 31 May 1938.
2. Referring to the criticisms of the federal scheme, Zetland declared in his speech of 27 May 1938 that, though it may be possible to accommodate the reasonable requirements of both the provinces and the states, no such change could be considered till the federation had come into operation.

25. India and the World Perspective[1]

Some six or seven days ago I was invited to a Muslim conference at Mhow. About thirty thousand people were present and I told them that it was the last time I would be speaking before leaving for England. But within these few days many engagements came up and I had to speak so often. I am afraid that before I sail I may have to speak several times more.[2]

Let me thank you, the citizens of Bombay, for the expession of your affection. You have presented me with many sweet-smelling flowers.

1. Speech at Bombay, 31 May 1938. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 1 June 1938.
2. Jawaharlal left for a tour of Europe on 2 June 1938.

The fragrance of the flowers will fade soon, but the sweetness of your affection will endure long with me.

I have no definite programme because the condition of the world today is strange and ever-changing. The problems of India will be ever in my mind and I will study them in the context of world affairs. Unless one looks at the domestic problems in that light, one cannot understand them in their true perspective. If one looks ahead and farther away, problems nearer home would appear small and not so important as they seem.

Take for instance the Hindu-Muslim problem. Many people get excited about it. But if they look at the world they will find that it is nothing very new. In Egypt, Palestine and Iran there are similar problems though they are not known by the same name. It has nothing to do with religion. Such problems arise in all lands, where there is foreign rule.

I do not suggest that we should throw the blame on the foreign rule in this manner and forget our own weaknesses. But what I feel is that, if we look at the problem from the world point of view, the veil would be torn from it and we would see it truly as it is, as a purely political problem, which has no connection whatsoever with religion. On the other hand, from a nearer view it looks like a problem of jobs and seats.

We cannot devise a cure unless we know the nature of the disease. We are suffering from two kinds of illness, one is common to all the world, the other peculiar to ourselves, and both these are inextricably mixed up.

The British Government has been with us for 150 years. At present we are engaged in a life and death struggle with British imperialism. Therefore, we must understand what this empire is, how it arose and how it spread, and why it is in decadence now.

Many empires have come and gone, but the nature of the present-day empires is very different. The British Empire is an empire of commerce and finance. The crowned heads are mere outward symbols. The reality behind these symbols is the reality of big business.

We look at the Governors and Viceroys and think they form the government. Behind them there is the Secretary of State. But even the Secretary of State is a mere dummy. Real power lies in the hands of the merchants and the capitalists.

This explains the provision in the new constitution prohibiting the passing of any discriminatory legislation against British interests. All sorts of obstacles are being laid in the path of expansion of the shipping trade of India. We are supposed to have a new government, but we are shackled and bound from all sides.

I welcome the plain utterance of Lord Zetland. It makes at least one thing clear, namely, that there is an ocean of difference between the British and Indian viewpoints. The Haripura resolution is very clear on the point.[3] We are not opposed to the principle of federation; but the question is one of the kind of federation. Is it to be a federation of free India or slave India?

In the federation, as envisaged in the Government of India Act, all the real power is reserved to Britain. Moreover, it attempts to club together the partly democratic British Indian provinces with states that are at least a century and a half behind the times. One cannot yoke together a horse and a tortoise. If Lord Zetland does not understand this fact, it is his misfortune, but the Congress position is quite plain and it will do everything in its power to secure its objective.

We stand for full freedom. We stand for a constitution framed by a constituent assembly of the elected representatives of the people. In the framing of this constitution neither Lord Zetland nor the British Parliament will have any voice. That is our demand and as long as our demand is not met, the Indian problem will not be solved.

We should derive inspiration from the stirring call given to his countrymen by Kemal Pasha by getting the following words inscribed on the monument of freedom at Ankara: "Turk, be proud, work, have confidence".

The Congress has fought many battles and won some victories. The recent crisis in Orissa,[4] U.P., Bihar, as well as the clove boycott,[5] have shown the mass support behind the Congress. There was a day when Indians had to walk in shame in foreign lands. But today we can go to those places with some pride. Though we have not achieved freedom, we have shown that we have the courage to fight British imperialism and our achieving full freedom is only a question of time.

3. See p. 379.
4. The Congress ministry in Orissa had decided to resign from 5 May 1938 in protest against the appointment as acting Governor of J.R. Dain, the revenue commissioner, during the period the Governor of the province was to remain on leave. The crisis was averted when the Governor decided not to proceed on leave. Earlier, in April 1938, the Congress Working Committee had passed a resolution stating: "It is difficult for the Ministers to act as Ministers to those who have been their subordinates and who might have fallen into disfavour with them."
5. The revised proposals of the Zanzibar authorities for controlling the export trade in cloves had not satisfied the Indian community and in sympathy with them the boycott of clove trade was resorted to by the business community in India.

The Working Committee has passed a resolution about sending an ambulance to China.[6] Today thousands of people are being killed in China and whole cities are being annihilated. The Chinese are fighting bravely. Though I am aware of the military power of Japan, I have known all along that the Chinese cannot be beaten easily.

In this war, China has suffered greatly and Japan too will have much to suffer. I am very sorry for that. I have no ill will or hatred against the Japanese people, but the Japanese Government has so far imitated imperialist powers to the extent of dragging its country into war.

China and India are bound together by cultural ties. India has given to China her religion. It is but proper that Indians should express their solidarity with the Chinese people by sending an ambulance unit.

6. The Working Committee at its meeting held in Bombay from 15 to 19 May 1938 appointed a committee under the presidentship of Dr. Jivraj Mehta to take necessary steps to send a motor ambulance unit with necessary doctors and nurses to the Chinese National Government under the charge of Dr. Madan Atal.

[illegible]

and [illegible] will do everything in its power to secure its objective.

We stand for [illegible]. We stand for a constitution framed by a constituent assembly of the elected representatives of the people. [illegible] the framing of this constitution neither Lord Zetland nor the British Parliament will have any voice. That is our demand and as long as our demand is not met, the Indian problem will not be solved.

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The Congress has fought many battles and won some victories. The recent crisis in Orissa, [illegible]P., Bihar [illegible] shown the mass support behind the Congress. There was a day when Indians had to walk in shame in foreign lands. But today we can go to those places with some pride. Though we have not achieved freedom, we have shown that we have the courage to fight British imperialism and our achieving full freedom is only a question of time.

[illegible]

12

INDIA AND HER NEIGHBOURS

SRI LANKA

1. Sri Lanka[1]

Ceylon is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh and yet, of recent, the cries of "Ceylon for the Ceylonese" there and of retaliation here have been raised. These are narrow and separating cries and, whatever their ultimate effect, they leave behind a bitter taste in the mouth. Every thinking man, both in Ceylon and in India, must pause and consider that no word or act of his may spread bitterness between the two countries that have lived and are continuing to live in most intimate relations of culture and trade. In the past, India and Ceylon have had enriching cultural exchanges of language and literature and thought lasting up to modern times. Today, the Indian element forms over 15% of Ceylon's population and the country's trade with India easily comes first on the list. Then, why these cries and who raises them? Over 7 lakh Tamil coolies on the plantations and estates and the Malayalee domestic servants are in no way harmful to Ceylon's economic interests and do not enter into competition with Sinhalese labour. The lot of Tamil labour exploited by British estate owners is too sordid to excite the envy of the Sinhalese. Labour's interests do not clash and the reasons for the anti-Indian propaganda in Ceylon are to be found in more important and influential quarters. The Indian traders and bankers have hit their British colleagues rather hard and there is some competition between the Indian and the Sinhalese petty curios-dealing businessmen. And so in the sectional interests of a handful of traders and bankers and shopkeepers, the relations of two countries, who are so singularly united in their destiny by their past and their present state, are sought to be poisoned.

India will have nothing to do with this vicious propaganda. She recognises Ceylon as of her own self and respects her political individuality. She is desirous to encourage trade with Ceylon and there can be no talk of erection of hostile trade barriers. I only hope that the Sinhalese people will likewise recognise that Indian and Sinhalese interests do not clash and that the oppressor of both of our peoples is British imperialism. Only the continued amity of the two peoples will

1. Allahabad, 8 March 1937. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

ensure that Trincomalee, which the British have fortified as an air and naval base, shall not be used in defence of British capital and trade but shall act as the strong arm to protect the reconstruction of the Sinhalese and the Indian nations.

2. Burma and Sri Lanka[1]

Burma has recently been politically separated from us[2] and Ceylon has long functioned as a separate unit of the British Empire. But whatever the exigencies of British imperial policy might demand, India and Burma and Ceylon can never forget the cultural and commercial bonds that have tied them for thousands of years. The political shape of the countries has changed repeatedly during this long span of years but our deep attachment has continued and will continue. It will continue, among other reasons, because today we have to face essentially the same problem and the same opponent. That opponent is British imperialism and that problem is how to free our people. All over the world events are marching apace covering in a few short years the track of centuries, and imperialism, allying itself to fascism, struggles to maintain itself. But it struggles in vain, for the freedom of the peoples of India, Burma and Ceylon, as of the rest of the world, cannot long be delayed.

In this struggle between the mighty forces of imperialism and nationalism and social freedom, British policy is ever trying to weaken us by introducing fissiparous tendencies and by diverting our attention to minor conflicts which it encourages. We must beware of this and we must not permit ourselves to become tools of British imperialism. The separation of Burma has an inner and wider significance which must not be missed. It is in furtherance of British imperial preparations in the East for the world crisis which already overshadows the horizon. Burma has special importance because of its oil. A little beyond it, Singapore, with its strategic position and powerful naval base, commands the routes between the East and the West. Trincomalee in Ceylon has developed into a naval and air base of the first importance.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 11 March 1937. *The Leader*, 14 March 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 161-164.
2. Acting on the Simon Commission's recommendation, the Act of 1935 provided for separation of Burma from the rest of the country, and this came into effect on 1 April 1937.

These are the dominating facts of the situation and behind and overshadowing them is the threat of world war. We must consider our smaller problems in relation to them.

Both in Burma and Ceylon cries have been raised about Indians exploiting the people of the country. Curiously enough those who are telling us about this most frequently are representatives of British imperialism and British commerce who have exploited our countries systematically and pitilessly for generations and reduced our people to a state of appalling poverty. They want to preserve this monopoly of exploitation and because Indian businessmen have entered into some competition with them in certain fields of activity, they have tried to embitter the relations of Indians with the Burmese and the Ceylonese. Conflicts are arising where none existed and tariffs and trade wars might naturally follow, as they are doing in the rest of the world. That would be the height of absurdity. If India put on a duty on coconuts from Ceylon, how would Ceylon fare? Ceylon's trade with India is easily first on the list, so also Burma's. Any trade conflicts between us would inevitably injure all concerned.

But why should there be conflict? Not only do we have our long cultural background to unite us, but our political and larger commercial interests do not clash. Labour interests also do not come into any real conflict. It may be that certain trades come into occasional competition but they do not affect the larger interests much and such competition is easily capable of adjustment.

We want, of course, to protect our nationals wherever they might be. We want them to have fair play; we want the dignity of India to be respected in them even though they may be poor workers or coolies. We may not have the power to protect them effectively today, but we have the will and we shall soon have the power. But our conception of nationalism is not that of an aggressive racialism ignoring and overriding others' rights. We want peace and cooperation with our neighbours for our mutual benefit and advantage. We want to encourage trade and contacts and are opposed to the erection of trade barriers, except when unavoidable circumstances may force us to do so.

This general policy of peace and friendliness will govern our relations with all our neighbours and others who respect our rights and freedom. But Burma and Ceylon are more to us than neighbours; they are bits of ourselves, almost bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. How can we turn against each other, whatever happens? Let them realise that we, in India, will have nothing to do with the vicious propaganda that separates and embitters. We recognise fully that both Burma and Ceylon have their separate political entities and individualities. They have

both the right to fashion out their own path, and whatever this might be, they will have the goodwill of the people of India. And I hope that my countrymen will never permit or tolerate the exploitation by them of the peoples of Burma and Ceylon. We have had enough of exploitation under British imperialism. Let us all pull together and get rid of it.

I trust that the Burmese and the Sinhalese will approach these questions from this wider point of view, and recognise that there is no essential clash between Indian, Burmese and Sinhalese interests. We have lived in amity in the past and we shall continue to do so.

Six years ago I visited Ceylon[3] and since then life has been hard on me, and it seems to me almost that an age has passed. But the memory of that visit is vivid in my mind and it freshens and delights me. How can I forget the love and welcome that I received from all classes of people in that island, whose beauty gripped my heart?

I have never been to Burma. But I hope to repair that omission and, if the fates are kind to me, I shall go there in the course of the present year and pay my homage to the people of Burma.

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 4. pp. 517-531.

3. To K. Parameswaran Pillai[1]

Allahabad
March 30, 1937

Dear Sir,[2]

I have your letter of the 24th March together with its enclosures. The statement I made on India, Burma and Ceylon had references to wider issues.[3] In considering these issues I feel that there should be as few trade barriers as possible between the different countries. Such trade barriers, though they may benefit some groups here and there, ultimately injure trade and hit the consumer. But these were general remarks.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-12(i)/1937-38, p. 213, N.M.M.L.
2. President of the Travancore Coconut Growers Association; in his letter of 24 March 1937, referring to Jawaharlal's statement of 11 March 1937, he said that if the Indian coconut industry were not protected it might be ruined in Kerala.
3. See the preceding item.

In applying them to any particular case one has to study the circumstances and I do not intend to pass any judgement on the question of protecting the coconut industry of this country. That is a matter which must be studied in all its bearings before the decision is taken. One cannot treat it apart from the wider issues. Thus a tariff wall in regard to certain commodities would lead to a tariff wall in the other countries also and thus a trade war begins which injures all concerned. But I can quite conceive of circumstances when we are forced to give protection to prevent foreign dumping or for other good and sufficient reasons.

As I have said above I did not intend to give any opinion on the particular issue that you have raised. But I do feel that that issue must be considered from the larger viewpoint. Obviously the future welfare of the people of Kerala must command our attention. My previous statement was made with a view to easing the situation between Ceylon and India for I have been noticing with regret that Ceylon is drifting further away and raising prohibitive tariff walls against us.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. To K. Natesa Aiyar[1]

Allahabad
August 27, 1937

Dear Friend,[2]

I have your letter of the 18th August. I thank you for writing to me at length on the subject. It is true that Mr. Aluwihare wrote to me recently and asked for my opinion on the proposed legislation in Ceylon.[3] He sent me a copy of the draft bill. I had no time to look through this matter in any detail and so I had given it to a colleague of mine here

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(2)/1937, p. 341, N.M.M.L.
2. A leader of the Indian community in Ceylon and member, Ceylon State Council.
3. It was proposed to extend the franchise to Europeans and Sinhalese labourers, but not to the large number of Indian labourers on the ground that they did not pay the land tax.

to consider it. I shall hand over to him your letter. I understand that in his reply to Mr. Aluwihare he pointed out that any discrimination as regards franchise or otherwise against the settled Indian population would be highly unfair. Naturally he could only deal with the principles involved and not with the details of the legislation. He will write to you in answer to your letter.

It is always desirable in such conflicts not only to adhere to principles and to protect the rights of our countrymen abroad but also to adopt a friendly attitude towards the people of the country and to seek to arrive at a satisfactory compromise.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

VISIT TO BURMA

5. India and Burma[1]

I have come to Burma in two capacities, in my individual capacity as a person who has long wished to visit Burma, and as the head of a great organisation. I have brought to the people of Burma the goodwill and affection of the people of India. Whatever may befall us, the people of Burma can rest assured of the goodwill and affection of India.

India and Burma have been united by ancient bonds for over 2,000 years and, despite separation, nothing can break that living link and the numerous other links of art and culture. People talk about the political separation of Burma and are worried over it. I want you to look upon the relations between India and Burma in the right perspective—the perspective of 2,000 years' contact.

Burma and India must carry on together though they are now politically separated by England. Cooperation and the preservation of a friendly spirit between Indians and Burmans must always be sought by all those who believe in the welfare of the people belonging to these

1. Jawaharlal visited Burma from 6 May to 20 May 1937. This was a reply to an address presented to him at a public meeting in Rangoon on 7 May 1937. From *The Hindu*, 12 May 1937.

countries. We must also condemn most strongly the policy of the imperialists who want to exploit the masses and the nationals of the subjugated countries for their own benefit.

I am very thankful to you for the honour you have shown to me by welcoming me to your great country. I want to tell you how very fascinated I used to feel by your country when as a young boy I had an opporunity to read books about Burma. It is only today that my desire has been fulfilled. In your address you have referred to my sacrifices for India's freedom. I, however, want to tell you that it is not only I who has made sacrifices for India's struggle. Many Indians have done so and it is that sacrifice which has put new life and new spirit among us. So far as the political separation of Burma is concerned, it is impossible to say, during these days of speedy transport facilities, that any country could be separated from another. However, I want to submit that all problems relating to India and Burma should be tackled in a friendly spirit and with proper cooperation.

The fight for freedom which is now being waged will produce results of far-reaching importance. It is not only the future of India and Burma that will be decided as a result of this fight. This struggle will also decide once and for all the future of that horrid thing, imperialism.

I must confess that I do not know much about the recent political affairs in Burma. I however wish to direct your attention to what has happened in India recently. In many provinces the Congress has won the elections overwhelmingly in spite of the tremendous obstacles put by the government and vested interests. Congress parties in six provinces are supreme. Ministries were offered to them but they refused. They are not after the ministries but are after the conquest of power so that they may put an end to the poverty and misery of the Indian people. Because the Government of India Act does not give them that power they are opposed to it and wish to put an end to it. They think they might hasten and expedite it by accepting the ministries and, therefore, they asked for assurances. They asked that they should be given a free hand even in the limited sphere of legislative activity. The authorities refused to give them the assurances and the result was that phantom minority ministries, with no strength behind them, are functioning in those provinces.

Indians have gone to all parts of the world and I wish them well. I am, however, of the opinion that Indians will be honoured in other countries only when they have achieved freedom in their own country. The troubles of Indians in South Africa and Zanzibar would disappear. Indians do not go to foreign countries like Europeans to exploit others. I want Indians to spread all over the world, but I do not want them to

go there to exploit the people of those countries. I do not want them to imitate the people of Europe. To the Indians living in Burma, my advice is to live in cooperation with the Burmese, for their future is tied up with that of the latter. If Indians think they can live apart, or at the cost of the Burmese, they are mistaken. They are here on sufferance. This advice of mine is practical commonsense and not mere idealism.

I think the separation will isolate Burma and weaken her politically. But that is a question to be decided solely by the Burmese and the final word rests with them. I would ascribe two reasons which led the British to separate Burma from India. They are the growing strength of India and the desire to keep Burma down and under for a long time to come.

I would appeal to the Indians living in Burma to help their Burmese brethren in their fight for freedom. I would also appeal to the Burmese to help India in her struggle for independence. It is through mutual help and cooperation that the bonds of unity between India and Burma in their fight for freedom will be strengthened.

6. Why Burma was Separated[1]

Five days ago I arrived in Burma and during this period whatever I have seen has impressed me much. I feel that I am in no strange country but am in a part of India.

Burma has been separated from India by the British Government because its policy is one of divide and rule. Some people say that by separation a new chapter has been opened for Burma, but the fact remains that Burma is still a subject country.

The growth of national feeling in India during the last twenty years is indicative of the fact that India is increasing her strength to oppose the British administration.

Unemployment among the educated classes is widespread. There are thousands of young educated persons without jobs. The condition of artisans and the peasantry is the same.

1. Speech at a public meeting in Rangoon, 11 May 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 15 May 1937.

To the Round Table Conference in London, with a few exceptions, the government invited people who were landlords, zamindars, rajas and nawabs. They were not selected by the people. They were the government nominees. The result was that these people could not come to an agreement. They raised various questions but they could not solve them.

But anyhow the British Government drew up a constitution, and some thought that the constitution was meant to give more powers to Indians. On the other hand, I would say that it was an attempt on the part of the British Government to secure more powers for themselves. We do not want this constitution which has not been prepared by the people of the country. What India wants is a constitution framed by a constituent assembly. I do not want outsiders to draw up the constitution for us by sitting in London.

In the recent general elections in India the Congress has secured a majority in six provinces. The Congress refused to accept office because the Governors refused to give assurances. The Governors selected their own ministers who had no support of the majority of the elected representatives. The Governors would not summon the legislatures in those provinces saying that that was not the proper time. But the fact is that the government knows that if the legislatures are summoned, the ministers whom the Governors have chosen will be turned out of office.

The fight for freedom will however continue although we are not offering satyagraha or any other similar movement for the present.

There are still hundreds of young men and young girls detained in Bengal without trial.

The press regulations and the special powers of the police are still there. I therefore ask: what is the good of the new constitution? The new constitution contains several safeguards, and one of them is that nothing should be done which may affect British commerce. I want to know if Indian trade could prosper under these circumstances. There is hunger and unemployment in the country, and these can be solved only after the attainment of Swaraj.

Burma's problems are the same and here too unemployment and poverty are increasing although not on the same scale as in India. The country is full of wealth such as minerals, oil, petrol and timber, but the foreigner benefits by them. That is the reason why Burma has been separated.

The importance of oil specially in modern war cannot be overemphasised. Any country without sufficient oil cannot stand a war. Factories in Europe are busy day and night manufacturing armaments. That is the reason why oil is so useful. The availability of oil in Burma is one

of the causes of separation.

The war that is going on in Spain at present has two forces involved in it. These are fascism and nationalism. The fate of all Europe as also that of India is dependent on the result of that. If fascism triumphs it would equally be a victory for imperialism. Therefore, India sympathises with the present Spanish Government and has helped them in their fight. I am glad to say that a hundred or more Indians are fighting in Spain. The Indians have also sent monetary help to Spain for the relief of the wounded.

In the end, I want to appeal to the Indians in Burma to cooperate with the Burmans and help them in their fight for freedom as they should help the Congress in India.

7. The Policy of the Indian National Congress[1]

Question: Is it a fact that a mandate was given by the Indian National Congress to Mahatma Gandhi to claim at the Round Table Conference Purna Swaraj meaning complete independence to give the nation control over the army, external affairs, finance, and fiscal and economic policies?

Jawaharlal Nehru: Yes.

Q: Has this claim been granted by the Government of India Act?

JN: No. Very far from it.

Q: Would it be possible to attain Purna Swaraj by working the Government of India Act?

JN: Certainly not. Therefore the Congress rejects the Act utterly.

Q: If it is not possible, what is the object of the Congress Party in entering the legislative councils?

JN: To wreck the Government of India Act and work for a constituent assembly.

1. Interview to the press, Moulmein, 15 May 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 23 May 1937.

Q: Will a Governor allow a party to form a ministry if its sole object is to wreck the reforms?

JN: In several provinces the Governors have actually invited the Congress leaders to form ministries in spite of the declared policy of the Congress to wreck the reforms. But the Congress leaders refused to form ministries, because the Governors did not give assurances not to interfere.

Q: Is it not a fact that the ministry in a democratic country accepts office to work the constitution?

JN: It is an undoubted fact in a democratic country. That, however, does not apply to India, which under the British rule is not a democratic country. The Act is not democratic.

Q: Is it not your candid opinion that the rejection of the reforms and acceptance of office are inconsistent?

JN: They are inconsistent. But the fundamental inconsistency lies in the Act itself. The Act talks of responsibility but does not give it. Therefore, the Congress enters the councils to destroy it, not to work it. A person may, in theory, accept office not to cooperate but to work for a revolutionary change as far as possible.

Q: Would it be possible under the Government of India Act for the Governor to give a pledge that he will not exercise his powers of veto and certification?

JN: Yes, many eminent jurists, including Mr. Berriedale Keith, have declared that the Governors may give assurance demanded by the Congress.

Q: Have you heard that the House of Representatives in Burma refused the demand in Part I of the budget by which the allowances of 18,000 pensioners were affected? If such a thing happens what would you suggest to remedy or rectify the error?

JN: I do not know anything about the particular matter. But given the responsibility what the legislature does must be presumed to be right.

Q: Do you think that communal representation in the legislative bodies is the greatest hindrance towards Home Rule?

JN: It is bad and a hindrance, but it may not be the greatest hindrance.

Q: Do you know that in Burma, the Burmese people have no differences of castes or creeds?

JN: Yes.

Q: Do you not think that Indians in Burma should all join in the common electorate instead of claiming separate communal representation?

JN: Yes.

Q: There are 13 Indians out of 132 members in the House of Representatives. Do you think they are able to protect their interests?

JN: Certainly not, if it means in opposition to the great majority. But they may do so in cooperation with Burmans.

8. On the Separation of Burma[1]

The present constitutional deadlock in India is really a deadlock between Indian nationalism and British imperialism. The safeguards in the new constitution are designed to prevent the growth and the progress of Indian industries and business.

When the question of separation first arose, it was felt in India that it was being deliberately decided upon by the British Government, and consulting the Burmese for their opinion was merely an eyewash. It is in pursuance of a larger imperial policy in connection with the naval base at Singapore. The problem is interconnected and is for the purpose of strengthening the British power in the East. Another factor which influenced British policy is the presence of oil in Burma which is so important for power and transport in times of peace and war. It is foolish to suppose that by political separation both countries could be completely severed. Ideas and ideals have no barriers and cannot be prevented from spreading.

1. Speech at Rangoon, 17 May 1937. From *The Orient Gong* (a journal published in Rangoon), 2 June 1937.

The increase in the postal rates between India and Burma is a deliberate attempt to create barriers between the two countries. It is an astounding fact that articles would now cost more to be sent to Calcutta than to be sent to London, and I cannot conceive any intelligent man doing such a thing. I can understand the British Government deciding on the question but I cannot understand Burmese friends agreeing to it. To me it appears to be a psychologically hostile decision. I, therefore, appeal to you to do your utmost to remove any feelings of conflict between India and Burma.

9. Farewell to Burma[1]

What a magnificent welcome you have given me, men and women of Burma, Burmese and Indians alike! I came as a messenger of goodwill to you from the Indian National Congress and our people. I expected friendliness and goodwill in return. But the affection that you have showered on me in such abundant measure has overwhelmed me, and now that the time has come for me to bid you goodbye, I am sad at heart at leaving you and the many precious friends I have made here during these crowded thirteen days. This fair land is pleasant and beautiful, but pleasanter and more delightful are the people of this country, their bright young faces, their women with the laughter in their eyes. We in India who have responsibility cast on us for the future of our unhappy millions have a heavy burden to carry and it is not always easy to put on a brave smile when so much suffering and misery and difficulty surround us. I came to you tired and weary in spirit, but your joyous enthusiasm removed that weariness and lightened the weight of the burdens that I have to carry. Your eyes told me, even more eloquently than your verbal assurances, of the comradeship that is ours. Who will dare to break that union? Who will venture to tell us that we are apart from one another?

The separation of Burma has come. What of it? What difference can this little thing, imposed upon us by foreign will, make to us or to

1. Statement to the press, Rangoon, 20 May 1937. *The Hitavada*, 30 May 1937 Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 167-169.

the bonds that unite us, bonds of the immemorial past that have sunk deep into our consciousness, bonds of the present, of mutual self-interest and a common struggle for freedom, shining bonds of the future with all its hope and promise for our peoples? India, the ancient among nations, still lives and her youthful vitality in the present age has surprised the world. Even in her subjection and degradation, she has produced great sons and daughters, and dear to her children is this old mother of theirs in spite of her failings and weaknesses. To Burma, her sister, she gave the most precious of her gifts two thousands years ago or more. Long ages afterwards, the chain of circumstance brought the same fate to us, the same subjection, and bound us closer together in sorrow and suffering. We shall come out of this valley of the shadow also together.

Indians have come and settled down in Burma in large numbers and some are prosperous but many are poor exploited workers and peasants whose lot is similar to that of the Burmese worker or peasant. Many an Indian has made this country his homeland, for others it is an adopted land. For both, the prosperity of Burma spells happiness; the distress of Burma, misery and sorrow. More and more their interests are tied up with those of the children of the soil. How can differences of any moment arise between the two?

We in India claim that in all matters concerning us the interests of the people of India must be paramount and it is for them to decide ultimately what these interests are. So also in Burma. The interests of the Burmese masses must be paramount and it is for them to make final decisions regarding their interests.

The world is in ferment today and vast problems face all of us. There is a continuing crisis everywhere and catastrophe looms over the horizon. How shall we confront these problems, for we ignore them at our peril? Little men and little countries lose themselves in the petty things of life and are overwhelmed and swept away when the big things come. But the wise and the brave look further and deeper and prepare their country for a high destiny. That destiny calls to us; the future beckons to both India and Burma. Shall we not answer that call, marching in step together through the trials that may lie in store for us, strengthening and heartening each other, and winning freedom for our masses together?

And so fare you well, dear comrades of the past and of today. May good fortune be yours and may all of us have the courage and wisdom and perseverance which our countries demand of us.

10. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

S. S. Karoa
May 22, 1937

My dear Krishna,

After two strenuous weeks in Burma, Indira and I are going to Penang in Malaya. During this time in Burma I have been very largely cut off from Indian politics. Burmese newspapers are thoroughly bad and since the recent enhancement of postal and telegraphic rates between India and Burma, press services have been reduced. Apart from this I was kept on the move all the time, chiefly by air, and hardly had time to devote to newspapers.

I have received two of your letters dated the 26th of April and the 1st of May. About the Trotsky business, there is no question of my associating myself with it.[2] It is true that I was asked to give my name to an appeal for an enquiry into the Moscow trial. I have no intention of doing so. It is true that when I was in Europe I expressed a measure of sympathy for Trotsky because of what I considered unnecessarily harsh persecution. But recent events have not advanced him in my opinion. I must confess, however, that all these recent trials in Russia still remain partly a mystery to me....

My Burma visit proved to be very tiring. I covered a great part of the country, mostly by seaplane, and I think I succeeded in doing some good work. Quite a lot of mischief has been done during the last few years and there has been much tension between the Burmese and Indians. One of the evidences of this is the astonishing enhancement of postal rates which the new Burmese legislature has passed. Do you know that it is more expensive to send letters and parcels from Burma to India than it is to send them to England? This seems to me monstrous. All this ultimately is to the disadvantage of Burma, for it isolates her. British policy is to cut off Burma from India as much as possible, and the Burmese people have largely acquiesced in it. Politically and industrially they are behind India, and to be cut off from India means further domination of British interests. As a result of my visit some realisation of this state of affairs has taken place.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. Krishna Menon in his letter of 26 April 1937 suggested to Jawaharlal not to associate himself with the appeal against the trial of Trotsky and added that "even those who at the first trial were rather shocked now begin to understand the nature of this widespread and overt conspiracy against the U.S.S.R."

Another fact that might interest you is this: oil and petrol which are produced in Burma in large quantities are sold at a higher price in Burma than in England or in India. Right in the oilfields the price of petrol is higher than the English price. A more flagrant example of capitalist monopoly it is difficult to conceive. The Burma Oil Company is of course all powerful with its enormous resources and close affiliation with Anglo-Persian Shell and other oil combines.

We expect to be in Malaya 13 days. We shall go from Penang to Kuala Lumpur and Singapore returning to Penang from where we sail on June 5th. We reach Calcutta on the 12th and Allahabad, probably, on the 14th June. There is hardly time for you to communicate with me in Malaya. But in case you wish to do so and there is time to catch me there, my address is: 9 Holland Road, Kuala Lumpur. For cables: Care Publicity Kuala Lumpur.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

11. To Ba Maw[1]

Allahabad
July 21, 1937

Dear Dr. Ba Maw,[2]
I was astonished to receive yesterday a cutting from *The Rangoon Daily News* giving an interview from you.[3] Fortunately I received a telegram about the same time from Rangoon informing me that some of my colleagues had met you and pointed out to you that there had been a great misunderstanding. I understand that the misunderstanding will be cleared up in the press.

I write to you, however, even without waiting for further information from Burma, to assure you that the reports that seem to have been made about my criticising you are entirely without foundation. What

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-8/1937-38, pp. 201-202, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1893); a teacher and lawyer who entered politics in 1933; leader of the Burma Anti-Separation League and member, Burma Legislative Council, 1933-34; Education Minister, 1934-37, and Prime Minister of Burma, 1937-39; arrested in 1940 for opposing British policy; head of the state of Burma under Japanese occupation, 1943; interned in Japan, 1946; later resumed legal practice in Rangoon.
3. Ba Maw was reported to have said that he had been pained by certain remarks alleged to have been made by Jawaharlal during his visit to Burma.

astonishes me more than anything else is that a vulgar epithet should have been put in my mouth, a word which to my knowledge I have never used in regard to any person, much less about you.

I do not know when I am supposed to have referred to you in this or any other manner. In India I have made no reference at all in public or in private. In Burma I think I did refer to you in a public speech once or perhaps twice. The reference was brief and it related to what you were reported to have said during the Coronation ceremonies. I said, so far as I can remember, that the speech of yours did not fit in with the policy you claim to stand for in Burma. That I think is the sole criticism that I made. Generally, my attitude was one of keeping aloof from internal Burman politics, partly because I did not wholly understand them and partly because it would have been absurd for me to interfere during a brief visit. I was attracted to some extent by certain youth organisations who were struggling to develop a clearer ideology. My own impression of Burmese politics was, and I give it to you frankly for what it is worth, that there was not enough of ideology or clear principle about them. They were governed far more by personalities and the personal equation. So I welcomed the growth of new ideas of a socialist character among young men and attended some meetings organised by these young parties. Apart from this I took no part in Burmese politics. Of course wherever I went I spoke on political questions, both Indian and Burmese, because these questions interest me. Personally, I am convinced that the struggle for freedom in Burma or India is intimately connected and cannot be separated without injury to both. Our national movement is more advanced than the Burmese movement in spite of the fact that Burma has some very great advantages. Perhaps our very disadvantages in India have spurred us to greater endeavour.

Anyhow, I am not discussing large political issues in this letter. I began writing to you to express my regret that my name should have been associated with a vulgar and absurd word in criticism of you. I had the most hospitable and cordial welcome from the people of Burma and I came back, as I stated repeatedly, with great feelings of attachment and gratitude for those charming people. Even though Burma may be politically separated from India, I hold that we have much in common with each other and, in particular, that our fight for freedom is a common struggle. In this struggle if India can help Burma in any way I shall be most happy.

With regards to Mrs. Ba Maw,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

12. To Niranjan C. Galliara[1]

Allahabad
Feb. 9th, 1938

Dear Niranjanji,[2]

Your letter of the 31st January.[3] I am fully aware of the difficulties that you have pointed out. For the present, what we propose to do is to lay down two principles regarding Congress work in Burma. We do not want to consider Burma as completely cut off from India, and to treat it as we would treat, for instance, Malaya. On the other hand, we realise that we cannot treat Burma as a part of India like Bengal or any other province. We must therefore find a middle way. In our constitution, we shall just state that a Burma Congress committee can be formed with subordinate local committees and that the object of this committee will be in addition to the objective of the Indian National Congress, that is, the independence of India, to work for the freedom of Burma. This committee will not be confined to Indians but must include Burmans also. It is likely, of course, that few Burmans will join it. But the door must be open. This committee must consider the question from the point of view of the masses in Burma including the Burmese and Indians alike. It must not therefore function as a purely Indian organisation claiming rights for Indians as against the Burmans. For this purpose some Indian association can function.

How exactly the Burma Congress committee should be formed is a matter for further consideration on which we should like fuller suggestions from our friends in Burma.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-8/1937-38, p. 17, N.M.M.L.
2. An Indian political worker in Mandalay.
3. He referred to the strained relations between the Indians and the Burmese and made certain suggestions for making the Congress organisation in Burma a more effective body.

VISIT TO MALAYA

13. The Situation in India[1]

Question: What is the aim of the Congress?

Jawaharlal Nehru: The aim of the Congress is not self-government or Dominion Status. It aims at achieving complete independence for India.

Q: What have you to say about the emigration of Indians to Malaya? Is it desirable or not?

JN: I am not in a position to say whether it is desirable or not. I do not know enough of the subject. I am, however, inclined to think that Indians are bound to drift here owing to unemployment in their homeland. In the matter of jobs, however, I think the interests of the people of the country should come first. They should be given preference.

Q: What about the Indian children born and educated here, whose parents are permanently domiciled here?

JN: I think they should be treated as people of the country. Still, it is not a subject on which I would like to say much as I do not know enough about it.

Q: Would you please say a few words on the present situation in India?

JN: It is not merely a question of the provincial Governors giving the assurances demanded by the Congress. It is a conflict for power between British imperialism and Indian nationalism. The former has the power and the latter wants to get it from them. The struggle would go on till we get it. As it is, in the present situation, the new Government of India Act is not functioning as it is meant to function. In granting the electoral privilege, it was intended that the people should rule themselves through their elected representatives. The appointment of minority ministries by the Governors is a negation of all this.

1. Jawaharlal visited Malaya from 23 May to 4 June 1937. He gave this interview to the press at Penang on 23 May 1937. From *The Hindu*, 31 May 1937.

Q: What would happen if the provincial Governors refused to give the assurances asked for by the Congress?

JN: In three months or so, the provincial legislatures will have to meet to pass the budget, etc. Then, in the provinces, where the Congress holds the majority, the ministries will be defeated. It would then be open to the provincial Governors to do one of two things. They will either have to rule autocratically by certification or dissolve the legislatures and order a new election. In the latter case, the same situation will recur as the Congress will not assume office. The aim of the Congress Party is to put an end to the Act by creating a situation which would make it impossible for the Act to function.

Q: Do the "reserved powers" of the Governors constitute the chief objection to the Act?

JN: Yes, that is one objection. But the main objection is that the Congressmen have been denied the right by the British Parliament to decide what should be the constitution for India. India must decide that for herself, and the Congress has asked that a constituent assembly for the whole of India, elected by adult suffrage, should draw up the new constitution.

Q: But what is the ultimate aim of the Congress? It is Dominion Status or complete independence?

JN: It is definitely complete independence. There can be no Dominion Status for India. She is not on the same footing as Canada or South Africa or Australia. English jurists have not denied that the Statute of Westminster gives the dominions the right to secede. It only means that if any dominion secedes, Britain would not go to war against that dominion. In the case of India, it is different. If Britain loses India, she would cease to be an empire.

Q: If India gets severed from Britain, would she not fall a prey to some other great power—say, for instance, Japan?

JN: In the first place, while Japan is a great and an aggressive power, her economic situation is critical, and it is doubtful if she would finance a prolonged campaign against India. Japan is hemmed in on both sides by two hostile powers, Russia and America, neither of whom is likely to keep quiet and let her capture India. Then, there is China, next door to Japan, which, even though not very powerful, is hostile to Japan. It would be a better proposition for Japan to try to gain full control of China, but even this she has so far failed to do. For the past hundred

years or more, the question of India has dominated British foreign policy and her possession has given England great prestige, besides wealth and economic advantages. All the other powers envy England for her possession of India. If England went out, the other powers would not let anyone among them get control over India. This balance of power equation which keeps even small nations like the Balkan states intact would be a safeguard for India. Moreover, if India gains complete freedom, it would be due to a strong moral force within her which would make it impossible for the British to rule over her any more. If that force is strong enough to reject the British who have been entrenched in India for over a hundred years, I am sure it would be too strong to allow any new foreign power to gain control over India. When India gains complete freedom, she would proceed to build up her defences. Of course, that would take time.

Q: Is India fit enough to assume complete independence?

JN: This question really does not arise. The process of getting fit begins with complete independence. Fitness comes only with the exercise of power. It does not come when others are exercising power. It has been suggested to us that a gradual evolution may be more satisfactory than a sudden transition. Gradual evolution is not possible in the world of today. All around us there are sudden changes and revolutions are taking place.

Independence does not mean that India would be hostile to Britain. On the contrary, it is quite conceivable and likely too that India would enter into political as well as economic treaties with Britain. This would become so even during the transitory period. British experts would be invited to assist until Indians are trained to fill all the posts. Such experts would, of course, be under the control of the Indian government which would be elected by the constituent assembly representing the people of this country. I do not think there would be any difficulty about the transitory period.

Look at our North West Frontier Province. There has been trouble there for over a period of a hundred years, yet no solution has been found.[2] I think the British Government's approach is hostile, and is therefore doomed to failure. The problem is largely an economic one. The tribes indulge in raids because they have no food and other supplies. Russia has solved a similar problem on her frontier with the same people by colonisation. Such an arrangement is more satisfactory than punitive expeditions.

2. See pp. 468-472.

14. Address to the Indians in Malaya[1]

This country of Malaya had contacts with India a thousand years ago and here a large number of Indians came and settled down and colonised the country and for hundreds of years brought contacts of one kind or other. But our new relationship with Malaya should be one of friendship. You must make friends with the people and try to help them as far as possible.

I have come to Malaya not with the object of going from place to place doing propaganda on behalf of India. I have come here for rest and relaxation. Being here for the first time it is inevitable that I want to see my countrymen and understand their problems as we might not have the chance of meeting again. I want, above all, to look at you and I want you to look at me as we have got to understand each other and do big things in India.

There is the big struggle for freedom going on in India which concerns you and me, whether you live in India or outside. If India is a subject country, her children will be treated as subjects and slave people wherever they might go and I want you to realise that we can do very little for them unless we change the whole structure of the government.

This struggle for freedom is of very great importance and you must remember that we have arrived at a stage in the national struggle where there is no room for compromise, where there is no room for representations and petitions, and therefore when you want us to put forward all manner of representations and petitions we cannot do it. I want you to realise that in India today our nationalist struggle has arrived at a stage when the next step is a change-over of power, and when this change-over takes place there can be no compromise about it, because you cannot have two groups of authorities holding power.

There is a great deal of confusion about this matter. Some people imagine that all we want is the Indianisation of the services and getting more and more jobs for Indians as Governors and other high officials. Now you will be surprised to learn that, according to me, if every state job in India was held by Indians from the office of Viceroy down and no other change was made in the government, it would do no good to the few persons who got the jobs. Therefore the freedom of India does

1. Ipoh, 24 May 1937. From *The Hindu*, 2 June 1937.

not mean Indians holding big jobs. We are after something bigger than that. We are after the removal and the ending of the poverty of the Indian people.

The main problem in India is the problem of poverty and unemployment. We cannot get rid of that by giving some jobs. What is the remedy? Before we start trying any remedy for the removal of the disease of poverty, we must have complete freedom of action. We cannot tackle that problem while both our limbs remain tied up and, therefore, we must have freedom to go along the path of progress. So, we have got to remove the barriers. The biggest obstacle is the government which is carried on in the interests of the big financiers of the City of London. Today, the position is that British commerce has got us by the throat.

We shall have to do something which will affect the millions in India and we cannot do that under the system followed by the British Government. Unless we change the government we cannot change the structure. So, if we want to tackle the problem of poverty, we have to remove the stranglehold of imperialistic interests.

If we want to tackle these problems, we must have power first. That power must vest with the masses of India and everyone of the 350 millions of Indians, to whatever religion or caste he may belong, should have a share in that power and in that freedom. It is then only that we will be in a position to fight the problems of poverty and unemployment in India. Before we think of that we must think of removing the obstruction of foreign domination. Essentially the fundamental problem is the political freedom of India. I need hardly tell you how this great organisation of ours, the Congress, has united the people of India from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, and disciplined them to put up this fight. Today we are capable of united action. I have no doubt that the time is not far distant when India will be free.

There is a big conflict taking place in the world today. India is in ferment and the big countries of Europe are arming today and we are on the edge of a volcano. Big things are going to happen and the fate of the world may hang in the balance in a year or two. I hope that those who live here will follow the Indian struggle closely and give much help to it because your welfare is linked up with it.

I want the Indians in Malaya to know that although they are far away from their mother country they are not forgotten. If the people of India cannot do much for their countrymen abroad, it is because they are faced with difficult problems.

The aim of the people of India is the achievement of freedom and the future of Indians abroad depends on the future of India.

15. On His Visit to Malaya[1]

A Malayan daily has suggested that apparently there is some secret motive behind my visit to this country. I want to state that I do not act secretly or furtively and I have given expression to whatever I have had in my mind.

My visit to Malaya has been sudden. I had been attracted to the country because I knew that it is beautiful and because my mind had been full of the historical connections between Malaya and India from remote ages past. As soon as I came to this country, it brought to my mind what had happened 1,500 or 2,000 years ago, how large numbers of Indians had come here, lived here, colonised the place and built up magnificent citadels. I found evidence in the language and customs of the people which reminded me of my own country, and what I saw made me feel more and more at home. My mind also goes back to the past more and more.

I may tell you how I became interested in politics. The world is in a queer state today and my country is also in a queer state. I could not tolerate the conditions I saw, and therefore I fought with all the strength in my body to change the conditions I did not like and perforce, whether I liked it or not, I have become a politician. How could any Indian help it? What we find in India will inevitably be found in any country under foreign domination.

This nationalist fervour is born out of the conditions that prevail in the country. In its broad sweep come many other activities of the nation. While nationalism is a good thing, it is also a bad thing since, although it is inevitable, you are not free in your own country because it makes you think of one matter only. The cultural and other aspects of life are then relegated to the background.

In your address you made a reference to the even tenor of life enjoyed in this country. I would, however, say that no one can escape getting rude shocks common to all of us. Today, we see the world in a tremendous ferment. It is not, perhaps, wise to think that you are cut off from these upheavals. I wish to urge upon you the need for considering these problems from a longer perspective.

1. Speech at Selangor, 25 May 1937. From *The Hindu*, 2 June 1937.

I want you to think of the history of India. How many of you know that in the Indus valley there have been dug up the remains of an ancient civilisation? That they dug up a magnificent city which is supposed to be over 6,000 years or more old and during these 6,000 years that have passed, a lot of things have taken place. Many things have happened to the advantage of India and many things have happened to her disadvantage; there have been many periods of progress and decay but India has carried on. When you take this long perspective of 6,000 years of history, it seems like the end of a chapter or a story.

I also want you tc think of the Indian National Congress in a certain way. We want freedom. Of course, we want to get rid of the foreign and alien control over our country. That was the basis of the movement twenty years ago. Ever since then, the movement has been directed to the strengthening of our people because the great problem before India is that our people, after long years of subjection, have not only lost hope but also lost all backbone and spirit. They go about with bent bodies and bent heads, sunken eyes and sunken stomachs with very little food to eat and no hope at all, and that is a terrible thing because physical domination is bad for a people. It is far worse than mental domination which comes after long physical domination. But the change that has come over the country in the last 16 or 17 years is a remarkable one. That change has been brought about under the most difficult circumstances. We had to do this in face of opposition from the state machinery. We had to do it under the most inhibiting conditions created by widespread poverty and starvation. Although we are very far from what we want for our people, we have advanced a sufficiently long way because we put the high ideals of the country before us. We do not believe in petty politics or in playing tricks with our rulers to give us freedom. We have got some measure of freedom because we have concentrated on the strength of the people, on the unity of the people of India; because we have built a firm foundation on the reverses and the oppression suffered by us.

Our movement is not a movement of the upper or middle classes or the aristocrats. Our movement has, from the beginning, been launched with the active support of the peasantry and workers of India. We have put our faith in them and have helped them. They now form the backbone of our struggle. This struggle has been carried on by the peasantry, not by a handful of people, but by unknown thousands.

Remember this that if you want to help in the struggle for the freedom of India, you must do your utmost to foster unity and raise the spirit of the people. You must function together. You must meet together, discuss your problems together, and if any troubles come to

one, you must suffer together. Only then will you be entitled to fight together.

I bring with me the greetings and good wishes of the Congress to Indians abroad, but I also wish to talk to you about your troubles. Many people have complained to us that the Congress does not do much for Indians overseas. The Congress cannot do much for them or anyone else at the present moment. The time may come when the Congress—rather the Indian people—would be free in India, when they may be able to do something for you. But I want you to remember this: whether we can do much for you or not, we have not forgotten the Indians who have gone abroad. I want Indians to go abroad and to be on friendly terms with other people and not to think of their advantage at the cost of the people of the country where they are settled.

In the end, I thank you for your address of welcome. I also thank those who have presented me with addresses and purses at the Indian Association. I apologise to them for not being able to speak at the association. I will remember this beautiful country when I return to the valley of sorrow—India.

16. Address to Indians in Singapore[1]

In this cosmopolitan audience gathered together in this cosmopolitan city, it is perhaps difficult to pick out the language which will suit all of us; also, my own linguistic attainments are limited, but I suppose and I have been told that it would be best if I spoke mostly in the English language. I have been only three or four days in Malaya, but I have almost lost count of time, because in these three or four days there have been several events, and so many things have happened. I have gathered so many new impressions that my mind is full of them and I almost seem to think that I have been here for many weeks. And I have hardly had time during this interval to separate or ponder over these new impressions of mine, but generally speaking, may I say that those impressions are happy impressions, pleasant impressions? Indeed, I knew that when I came to Malaya, I would find a beautiful land and many friends, and I expected a warm welcome here from my own countrymen and the people. I expected that welcome, but I must confess that I have been a little surprised at the extreme cordiality and warmth of the welcome I have received wherever I have gone. Indeed,

1. 26 May 1937. From *The Hindustan Times,* 13 June 1937.

to some extent they have been boisterous. To some extent they have come in the way of, what the newspapers say, my "quest for health and rest", but it does not matter. I am strong enough, I may tell you.

May I say I have been slightly hurt and somewhat amused to read in the newspapers occasionally discussions of various antics of mine when I am facing crowds? I have been described as possessing flashes of temper. It has been said that a certain place I was annoyed because the chairman of the reception committee was not present. I do hope that I am not all that. I may occasionally lose my temper, but I hope that I am not so discourteous as to behave in such a manner.

The fact is, I consider myself rather an expert in dealing with crowds. I have dealt with so many crowds, such enormous crowds as running to a lakh and over at a time, without any police help or any other help, and may I add that I found it easier to deal with the crowds without the help of any volunteers, unless the volunteers were specially trained for the purpose? So I consider myself an expert with crowds if I may say so, and when I see a crowd of persons pushing and jostling one another especially when there are children, the desire to curb them and produce order comes to me, and therefore I often jump down and go into the crowd, backwards and forwards, and in this way occasionally divert their attention from one direction to another. And when I do this, the crowd of journalists seems to mistake it for rage on my part.

The welcome I have received has been extraordinarily warm and I want you to think of that and try to find the reason for it, because it is not enough for me to say that I am a popular person, that people like to see me, or that there is something particularly attractive about me. That may be. Perhaps, I believe, I have a measure of popularity. I may have developed certain tricks to attract the crowd.

But there is something beyond this. It seems something more than that. Why does this happen? And I want you to remember also that if I attract such big crowds in Malaya, what happens in India?

In India, I have almost become an intolerable nuisance to my friends and to those who are not my friends, because it is hardly possible for me to move without enormous crowds surrounding me. I don't know where to go or to move, although from long practice I feel at home in the midst of crowds. The bigger the crowd, the more at home I feel.

In India, wherever I go crowds come to me. If I go to any place, they are there, and I do not know where to go so as to be away from them, unless I retire into the remoteness of a Himalayan fastness.

I went to Burma, partly—as I came to Malaya—to see Burma, and to meet the Burmese people, and partly also in quest of rest and a change. But this is what I found everywhere.

I have found people talking in a curious way—if I may say so without offence—and there were references made in some of the newspapers here about agitators and this and that, and my talking politics and not praising sufficiently the British Government and the British Empire. Well, I am afraid such phrases stick in my throat, and I am unaccustomed to talk all the time about the weather. I want a little more serious topic for conversation, and I am not going to insult you with frivolities. You gather here in your tens of thousands, and I want to tell you what I have in my mind, and what the millions of people in India think, and I want people to realise, whether they agree or disagree with me, that I think it would be discourteous of me to talk to them except about matters that are important to me, important to India, and I hope important to them.

What is this talk about agitators and my being anti-British and anti-this or pro-that? I thought that public men, dealing with public affairs, did not use such trite sayings nowadays. They talk of agitators as if millions of people are moved by a few of them, and they talk of them as if the world is in an uproar because of a few misguided persons. That simply shows that they have lost all sense of proportion. They do not understand what is happening.

Think of what is happening in India today, and perhaps from these vast crowds gathered here you will get an inkling into the Indian heart and mind, a glimpse of what India is today, and what is happening or likely to happen to India, for India is moved by something which is shaking her to her foundations, and the many millions of her inhabitants—many of them unconsciously—are being swayed by a current which sometimes brings about vast changes in the national history. These things happen sometimes in the life of nations. Those who understand it, it is all right for them, but those who do not, they go under, and get crushed by the current of humanity. You may like it or dislike it, but these things come when they choose to come.

You have a recent example in Spain. When certain geological changes take place under the earth, certain cracks appear, and there is a rumbling and a shaking of cities and populations. The people living in those cities are not consulted by those geological agents which bring about the earthquakes. In the same way you have human earthquakes in the world, when enormous currents move human beings in their millions, and if you know history at all, you will find that human earthquakes have come and shaken empires.

An intelligent person seeks to understand events, and so you had better understand the world of today. It is not a question of liking it or disliking it. If I walk in the street and stumble over a stone,

it is useless and foolish of me to curse that stone. Rather I have to blame myself for not having noticed it and avoided it. And so you had better understand the world of today, if you want to be prepared for the world of tomorrow. It is going to make a lot of difference not only to Indians, be they in India or outside, but also to the entire world.

India is a very big country. By its very size it makes a difference to the world just like China. Therefore what happens in China or India is of the greatest moment to the world because both countries have become a big problem for it.

You may think that China is a weak nation today, and not strong enough to combat or face aggression from outside. But do not think that a great nation like China, which has been carrying on for several thousands of years with many ups and downs, is going to collapse because some foreign power has attacked her territories. China will rise again and play an important role in world affairs. And similar will be the position of India.

India, in the course of thousands of years of history, has had many ups and downs, but she has come up again and again, and if you know anything about this history of India, you will know something of the vitality of the people.

You who live here in Malaya may be largely acquainted with the Indian "coolie" as he is called with some contempt. It is true perhaps because India herself has sunk to the coolie ranks among nations, and perhaps that contempt is justified, but remember that if India has gone down, she has also the vitality to rise again and is going to play a big role in the history of Asia and in the history of the world. The whole of Europe today is in a ferment and nations are ceaselessly making armaments. If you go to Europe today you will find a tremendous state of tension. You cannot be sure when and on what day you will find yourself in the midst of war. There is tension not only in Europe but all over the world. No doubt it is a very big problem in Europe at present. But, as a student of history, I can also tell you that the two major problems of the twentieth century will certainly be China and India. The problems posed by China and India may for the present remain confined to their respective countries, but the internal changes taking place in these countries can better be appreciated if we look at them in the background of the world situation.

You invited me and you were good enough to accord me this great welcome. This is a welcome which is obviously not meant for me but for that great movement which I represent. In your welcome address you have expressed your heart-felt sympathy for the struggle for freedom in India. It is right that you should send your greetings and goodwill to the

Indian National Congress, which has disciplined the people of India and which is holding aloft the torch of freedom in India. That great movement is something which every Indian should be proud of—not only be proud, but should strive to strengthen it in every possible way.

A certain newspaper wants to remind me that I have come here as a guest and I should not therefore forget the duties of a guest. I hope I have not forgotten my duties as a guest, but I am not aware that it is the duty of a guest to go about indulging in platitudes and suppress much that he has in mind and heart. I do not like saying anything about matters which I do not fully understand. About matters which I do understand, I like to have my say whenever anybody asks me or whenever I have the opportunity. Therefore if you ask me—and many people have asked me—about Malayan politics, labour conditions of Malaya and the rest, I hesitate to say anything because I do not know much about them. Probably I know more than many of you, but I do not have expert knowledge on these subjects which would entitle me to speak on them with authority. But I do consider myself an expert relating to matters pertaining to Indian politics and economics.

I have been shown every courtesy by all I have come into contact with, the government officials included, but that does not mean that when I meet my own countrymen, I must not speak on subjects which are of common interest to us.

This country, Malaya, is a pleasant country, and a very beautiful country, and the people are a delightful people, and may I say that the newspapers of Malaya have given me an agreeable surprise after my two weeks in Burma? In Burma the newspapers had little news, and I felt myself cut off from the outside world and India. Since coming here, I have found newspapers giving more news of the world, and the experience has been pleasant, because as a politician, I read a large number of newspapers. Secondly, newspapers interest me as I always think that if I have no other job, I might perhaps undertake the job of a journalist.

Generally speaking, this country, owing to a certain fortunate set of circumstances, has become politically stagnant. It is so, I feel it, I see it. Why? Because, unique perhaps among all the countries in the world, Malaya is overflowing with wealth. The government of the country is flushed with money, and despite depression, etc., it is a rich country.

Wherever you may go in Europe or Asia, you will find those countries plagued with the problems of poverty, unemployment and various other ills. And you will find the governments struggling hard to balance their

budgets; but the Malayan Government, I believe, has no such difficulties to face.

Where does the money come from? It comes mainly from tin and rubber. You are rich on account of your mineral and other natural resources. You have got this tremendous bounty from nature. You are entitled to it and it is a fact that Malaya has an abundance of and can produce these goods which are so necessary both in peace and in wartime. Therefore you are likely to do well financially, and as such a political and economic crisis is not likely to overtake this country. That is why I say that when the rest of the world is concerned with tackling the problems relating to budgets and unemployment, you are in the happy position of having adequate financial resources. But this economic stability may result in complacency which may make you forget the problems of the world and the tension about which I spoke to you. This tension makes life hard for the average European. You should not forget that the great changes taking place in the world are bound to affect you also. How can you escape those changes notwithstanding your economic wealth? And, therefore, you have to think and understand these problems.

This pleasant and magnificent city of Singapore is situated on one of the great highways of the world, linking the Middle East to the Far East. You occupy one of the most vital parts of the world. Yours is an international city as all kinds of people live here, and transact business, and in a sense you ought to develop the international mind, and consider international problems in their true perspective.

Although I am a nationalist, fighting for national freedom, I try not to succumb to this nationalistic feeling because I know that Indian affairs affect not only India but other parts of the world also. I therefore try to have an international outlook and try to understand what is happening all over the world. And thereby I try to get a true perspective of the world problems.

Just before I came to the platform, somebody sent me a typed list of questions for answering them. To me the questions appear to be silly. They have come from what is called the self-respect movement of Madras, a party now known as the Justice Party,[2] which has been loyal to the British Government. The questions put to me show that they are not worthy of any consideration. I regard the present self-respect movement in Madras singularly futile and very anti-nationalistic.

2. In 1917, T.M. Nair and P.T. Chettiar organised a party named the South Indian Liberal Federation, popularly known as the Justice Party, whose principal aim was to promote the interests of the non-Brahmins.

One of the questions put to me is whether I could say why the Congress Party cannot support the insurgents and rebels in Spain as they are nationalistic in character. It shows complete ignorance. In Spain today, you see, the rebels are trying to crush the democratic government.

Well, so far as I am concerned as also anyone else who cares for democracy and freedom, all our sympathy is with the people of Spain and against fascism and militarism. Therefore I am glad to say that although our resources are limited, we have extended to Spain some medical help and thus we have, to a little extent, helped them to fight against Franco and his fascist allies.[3]

I thank you all once again for your cordial welcome and reception.

3. Dr. Madan Atal went to Spain on 13 April 1937 to serve the wounded and the sick of the International Brigade. Some money was also collected in India and England for this purpose.

17. Women Should Not Be Weak[1]

I do not want to address you as 'ladies'. I consider the word to be rather vulgar. I would prefer to call you 'women'.

I am sorry I have come here for only a few minutes, rushing in and rushing out, because I always like to meet young girls and women of my country, to talk to them, and tell them what I think about India, and hear what they think on the subject, because I hold rather definite and also strong views on subjects relating to the women of India. But I do not—I must confess to you—like the woman who is like the flower in the field, and the lily in the valley, which just blooms and does nothing else. I do not like weaklings. I like physically fit men and women who can face mobs if necessary, and during the last 17 or 18 years India has produced large numbers of such women, who cannot only face a mob, but control a mob, if necessary, single-handed.

There was a time, you remember, when the idea of allowing a woman to go anywhere by herself was considered most unusual. She was to be accompanied by men to help her in case of an attack, and she was of course considered quite helpless and not capable of doing anything to defend herself. Well, I suppose there are such women in India still, but they

1. Reply to an address of welcome presented by the Indian Ladies Union, Singapore, 27 May 1937. From *The Indian* (Singapore), 12 June 1937.

are becoming fewer and fewer, and there are now large numbers of women who are not only prepared to look after themselves, but after the whole country, if necessary. We must have a spirit of self-reliance in our womenfolk, and let me tell you that the biggest event that has happened in India in the last few years relates to our women.

We had civil disobedience movements. All manner of things have happened but the biggest and most heartening event in India has been this change in women. In 1930, they came into the field. Many of them had never left the shelter of their homes. When their sons, husbands and brothers were sent to prison, they came out of the shelter of their homes and took over the duties of those who had been imprisoned, and they discharged those duties excellently and much better than men and because of that India has risen in the estimation of the outside world. Remember, a country is finally judged by the standard of its womenfolk and not of the menfolk. If the womenfolk are backward, uncivilised, illiterate and uncultured, then their country is no good, no matter what their menfolk be. Therefore, you must think in those terms today and derive benefit from the experience of the Indian women and learn to be self-reliant.

I just cannot appreciate the idea of women covering themselves with horrid jewels, like prisoners' chains. They are the things I cannot stand. I tell you, persons covered with brilliant chains and glittering diamonds really repulse me. I may however say that women should not neglect themselves. They should take some care of themselves and their looks. We appreciate it. We look for self-reliance, character and beauty in women, but do not want them to be like dolls.

18. To Rajendra Prasad[1]

Port Dickson (Malaya)
May 29, 1937

My dear Rajendra Babu,
I have just received your letter of the 22nd May. I have been having a very strenuous time in Malaya where the public receptions have been overwhelming. In many ways the Indian community here is very backward, specially so in politics. A comparison with the Chinese in almost every department of life and business is very much to the disadvantage

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.

of the Indians. My visit has shaken them up a great deal and created some stir all over the Malay Peninsula.

We are sailing on the 5th June from Penang. We reach Rangoon on the 8th and the same day we take a Scindia boat for Calcutta. This is a slow method of travelling and I will not reach Calcutta before the 13th June evening. But I want to have some experience of travelling by an Indian-owned liner. This also gives me an opportunity to visit Akyab and Chittagong. Probably I shall remain in Calcutta for a day or two as I want to consult some doctors about Indira. She has been keeping rather poorly and managed to get a little hurt in a motor accident in Singapore. Fortunately the injury was slight.

It has been difficult for me to follow developments in India. But my general impression is, and this is confirmed by your letter, that not very much is happening. Newspapers here and in Burma give little in the way of Indian news. And then I rush about so much that I hardly have time to read them. I am now, however, having some kind of rest for four days at a quiet sea-side place. We arrived here last night and even a day has made some difference and refreshed me.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

19. Indian Labour in Malaya[1]

Almost the first question put to me by journalists, on my landing in Malaya, was about Indian labour conditions here. Again and again, this question was repeated. It was a pertinent question for Indian labour has come here in large numbers and their present condition and future must demand the attention of the people of India and of the Malay Peninsula alike. I did not answer that question for I was not competent to do so. I had not read much about them. Some officers of the labour department of the government met me in various places and I had every courtesy from them and offers to show me any place

1. Penang, 31 May 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 12 June 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 178-187. This article was sent to the press in Malaya.

that I wished to see. They were good enough to send me some government publications and Mr. Srinivasa Sastri's report[2] on Indian labour conditions in Malaya. I am sorry that, owing to my heavy programme, I could not take advantage of those courteous and friendly offers, except to visit some labour lines in Singapore and Penang. Many of my countrymen here were also desirous that I should acquaint myself personally with labour conditions.

The responsibility for not paying these personal visits of inspection is thus largely mine. The fault certainly is not of the labour department or of friends here, and I may not therefore speak with any authority about the actual conditions in which Indian labourers live. Nor indeed would I have been able to do so even if I had paid a few visits of inspection. The problem is a much deeper one requiring careful study and it is this basic aspect that interests me especially.

I had occasion to discuss labour questions with officers of the labour department and with others, and during my brief stay in Port Dickson I have read some literature on the subject, including Mr. Sastri's report and the Central Indian Association's memorandum on it. I have also met a number of Indian labourers and seen crowds of them at various meetings.

All this would not entitle me to form final opinions about the living conditions and certain other specific problems discussed in the numerous reports. But behind these specific problems lie more important considerations about which even a newcomer and a layman may have something to say.

The first line of enquiry that suggests itself to me when I consider labour conditions in any country is about labour organisations. Are there any trade unions or other workers' organisations? Are they more or less independent or are they of the kind that are called company unions? Are they strong enough to protect the interests of the workers? What is the law on the subject?

Through generations of conflict and suffering in the industrial countries of the West, labour has learnt this primary lesson: that only by organising itself and developing its own strength through unions, can it hope to safeguard its interests and advance them. It has to contend against the organised power of the modern capitalist machine; it has to bargain with this power. What chance has poor labour got in this

2. Srinivasa Sastri had been deputed by the Government of India in November 1936 to study the conditions of Indian labour in Malaya. His report made several recommendations for improving the economic status and the living conditions of the Indian emigrants.

tussle unless it has unity and organisation at its back also? When we speak of trade unions we think invariably of workers' unions. But chambers of commerce and planters' associations and other employers' organisations are as much trade unions as any labourers' union. They have great financial resources at their back, intelligence and education, usually the support of the state, and the power to impose their own terms by threat of dismissal, involving starvation and misery. This has nothing to do with the merits or demerits of individual employers. It is a group or a class we have to consider which inevitably thinks in terms of that group's advantage. The strongest of workers' unions cannot face the employers' unions on equal terms. Unorganized workers are helpless before them.

The state (speaking in terms of a capitalist state) may help the workers' cause to some extent and protect their interests occasionally. But the state can seldom do much if the workers themselves are weak and disorganised. The best of the state's officers, who sincerely desire the betterment of labour, will be unable to meet or check the organised might of the employers who often have a dominating influence over the state. Sometimes it may be said that these employers and financiers are, for all practical purposes, the state. But even apart from this direct control or influence, there are other indirect but equally important influences at work. The high officials of the state belong to the same class or group, educationally, socially, culturally and economically, as the controllers of capital and labour, and inevitably it is easier for them to think in terms of that class.

Long ago Disraeli wrote about the two worlds,[3] the world of the rich and the world of the poor, and how they were entirely apart from one another, with next to nothing in common. He wrote about the English people in nineteenth century England. How much more is that applicable today in other countries. And when one adds to this the differences of race and language and an entirely different cultural background, the distance separating the two becomes vast. There may be sympathy and goodwill but it is difficult to understand even intellectually the other's viewpoint. Far more difficult is it to have an emotional awareness of the other's feelings, and it is only this that brings true understanding.

Even if the efforts of the state are helpful, and they undoubtedly are so sometimes, they are of the benevolent parental type, which do not

3. Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881); Conservative Prime Minister of England, 1868, and 1874-80; in his novel, *Sybil*, published in 1845, he spoke of two nations, that of the rich and of the poor.

encourage self-reliance and inner strength. To advance a community, self-reliance must be encouraged, and therefore an essential condition for the betterment of the workers is the promotion of trade unions and workers' organisations. The state itself will be able to do more for labour then than otherwise.

At present, so far as I know, there is little in the nature of labour organization in Malaya. I was told, however, and I was glad to hear it, that the labour department would welcome the formation of trade unions. I was told so in the course of a discussion about last year's strike of municipal workers in Singapore. In this strike, I understand that the labour department supported the strikers' demand for a higher wage. The strike was partially successful and wages were increased though not to the level asked for. The labour department is still urging, I believe, that the full demand of the municipal workers be agreed to. I hope, therefore, that every effort will be made to develop workers' unions in Malaya.

But what exactly are we driving at when we talk of labour and its future? Is it just to maintain a large force of labour, with a certain minimum degree of security and comfort, ever supplying larger dividends to industry, but with no other vital change in their condition? Or do we think in terms of raising them educationally, culturally and economically ever to higher levels, and making them true citizens of the country they live in and of the larger world? Surely, only the second alternative is worth working for, and it is the only possible way if one takes a long view. The rapid and progressive growth of the machine technique in industry, a growth which means ultimately greater production of wealth and higher standards for all, has strangely resulted in paralysing industry to some extent in the most highly developed industrial countries of the world by increasing unemployment and lessening purchasing power. The growth of man must keep pace with the growth of the machine or else both will go under.

So used were we in the past to a lack of the good things of life that we built up an economics of scarcity. When plenty came we thought and acted in the same way, and even went to the extent of destroying large quantities of commodities and restricting production to fit in with our out-of-date economics. It was an astonishing spectacle only possible in our topsy-turvy world, and it was a foolish attempt, for we must live up to science and the machine and their inevitable consequences. Crisis came and slump and depression and we imagine now that we are out of the wood. But the conflict between an age of plenty and an economics of scarcity continues.

A socialist has a clear and scientific way out of this muddle. He would introduce an economics of plenty to fit in with this age of plenty. He would encourage production to its furthest limit and he would produce for consumption and not for profit, and all the profits of industry would go to the community, ever raising its standards as the wealth of the country increases. There is no limit to this process as there is no limit to the progress and advancement of man. Private monopoly would be avoided and wages and salaries would be so adjusted as to give enough purchasing power to the community to consume all the goods produced. There can then be no unemployment and there can be no trade slump.

But socialism is a far cry in Malaya today. Let us think in terms of an intelligent capitalism. How did President Roosevelt try to meet the crisis that was strangling the United States? In order to revive a languishing trade and industry, he insisted on raising wages and shortening hours of work, and strengthened the trade unions and encouraged them to deal directly with the employers. The increased wages brought fresh purchasing power to the masses and business revived and the wheels of industry went round. For, under modern conditions of mass production, it is essential to have mass consumption. Without the latter the former cannot continue, and for mass consumption the masses must have the necessary purchasing power provided for them. And ultimately this leads to far greater profit to industry.

In Malaya probably the labour population is never thought of as consumers. To some extent this is true owing to the nature of Malaya's principal industries and the lack of other industries. But a closer analysis would demonstrate that the wealth and prosperity of Malaya would increase greatly if the purchasing power of the masses was continually raised.

Fortunately for Malaya, nature has blessed the country to an unusual degree and it has not suffered so far from the ills that afflict the world. Why should it not utilize this natural wealth to raise all the people who live here to ever higher standards, educationally, culturally and in other ways? Every investment of this kind pays itself back a hundred-fold in the human material that it produces. If England and France had the standards of life that prevail here and had these material resources, would they not use them to the fullest extent to raise the living standards of their masses, as well as their educational and cultural standards? A country is judged not by the few people at the top but by the masses at the bottom; a city is judged not by its few palaces but by its many slums.

Therefore I think that wages should be kept at as high a level as possible. A maintenance level is not enough. Labour is at least as

important, if not more so, as capital in the development of industry, and labour should share in the prosperity of the industry, as it is made to suffer when industry languishes. In many countries industry is in a bad way and may find some difficulty in raising labour's standards. Not so in fortunate Malaya. Why then should not all the people who live in this country, and especially the labourers and workers, out of whose efforts wealth is created, benefit fully by this abundance? It is bad business to divert the abundance to unspent surpluses and abnormal dividends.

I do not know why the wage figure for 1928 has been made into something like an ideal standard for Indian labour. What mystic virtue attaches to that year or to that figure? Even the present conditions of industry patently permit a substantial increase. And I fail to see entirely why Indian labour should be paid less than Chinese or other labour. Apart from other and vital considerations which affect the Indian labourer and his present relatively low standard of living, there are national aspects of this question, and India must claim equality of status and wage with others.

It is perfectly true that in India the wages are often lower (though not always so) than the wages paid here. There are obvious reasons for that but we need not go into them here. Why in any event should that be a measuring rod for wages here? Why should we not take the standard of wages in England or America as a measure? And then it must be remembered that a person who leaves his home and goes to another country expects and needs more.

These are general considerations which seem to me to apply to Indian labour here, apart from any particular aspects of the problem. But it would be highly desirable to have a close study and an economic survey made of the condition of Indian labourers. Such an enquiry would include family budgets and the whole question of indebtedness.

Labour has always attached great importance to the number of hours of work. The whole history of the labour movement all over the world is one long struggle to reduce hours of work. It is now well recognized that eight hours a day is the maximum desirable limit, and in some countries the working day is smaller. I think it is eminently desirable to reduce the working day to eight hours in Malaya.

If it is our purpose to raise the human material in the labour areas to higher levels, then education becomes a vital necessity. I feel that there is tremendous room for improvement in this respect and the fullest opportunities not only for primary but secondary education should be provided for.

It is our desire and settled policy in India to put an end to the drink evil. We are told, however, that the revenue from excise cannot easily be dispensed with and this excuse serves to continue a policy which saps the energy and vitality of the worker and impairs his efficiency. In Malaya at least this should be no reason for continuing toddy shops. The fear that 'Samsu'[4] brewing may spread may have some basis, but surely this is no reason why a present evil should be allowed to continue.

One other matter I should like to mention. I entirely agree with Mr. Sastri that the *kangany* system[5] of recruiting labour should go. I have heard much against it and nothing in its favour.

There are many other matters connected with Indian labour in Malaya which interest me. But this note has already grown unconscionably long and I must not add to it. One thing, however, I should like to stress. A nationalist government in India would take the deepest interest in Indian labour abroad. It would be interested because it would like to protect the interests of its nationals. It would also be interested because it could not agree to any conditions or status which were derogatory to the dignity of the people of India.

4. Chinese spirit distilled from rice or sorghum.
5. Under the *kangany* system an Indian plantation labourer was paid commission to recruit more labourers from India.

20. A Question of Manners[1]

For a variety of reasons I am considered 'news' by the world of journalism and 'stories' are frequently built up around me. To some extent, of course, all who dabble in public affairs, if they are prominently before the public eye, have a certain news value. And so I come in touch with large numbers of journalists and pressmen and I must say that I have always had the greatest courtesy and indulgence from them. Perhaps they found in me a kindred spirit, and indeed I feel a certain kinship with them, for I have something of the journalist in me. Here in Malaya, as elsewhere, I have found the same indulgence extended to me by the press.

1. Statement to the press, Kuala Lumpur, 1 June 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 12 June 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 170-174.

Some criticism has been addressed to me and sometimes what I have said or done has not been approved. I refer to this in no spirit of irritation, for I like criticism as it helps me to look at myself through others' eyes, to consider a question from various viewpoints, to try to think straight in the tangled web of modern life. And if a newspaper will not criticise, who will? That surely is one of the principal functions of the public press, and the press of today has a tremendously important part to play in public affairs.

I have been accused of a breach of etiquette, of a lack of good manners, of discourtesy to a host, of not behaving as I should have behaved. I am inevitably a partisan in such matters, and howsoever I might try to consider them impersonally and objectively, my sub-conscious self would incline me to partiality. Still I examine my own behaviour and try to discipline my actions and spoken words. It would not be surprising if an unending succession of crowds and functions resulted in a tension of the nerves and this led me astray occasionally. I live a strange, abnormal life.

How far have I been guilty of these various misdeeds? I have wondered to what extent these accusations were due to the strange novelty to Malaya of what I did or said. Into the pleasant, though superficial, drawing-room atmosphere I came with the dust of the field and factory and market place sticking to me, and my appearance or manners were not in keeping with the notions of the drawing room. Elsewhere the drawing room and country house have ceased to dominate the scene and the world of reality outside is continually knocking at their doors and sometimes pushing itself in. I came to Malaya with no particular intention of meeting crowds and addressing them, but rather for a pleasant and peaceful holiday in soothing tropical scenery. But the crowds came to me and enveloped me, and their shining eyes and abundant affection found an echo in my heart, and I told them of what they yearned to hear, of our struggle in India, of our hopes and fears, of the new strength and self-reliance that was ours, of our determination to put an end to poverty and unemployment, of the long night that must pass away before the coming dawn.

The crowds that came had not been trained in the manners of the drawing room, and if the arrangements were not ample enough there was much pushing and disorder. And when I adopted other methods to end the confusion, some people thought that I was merely losing my temper. Much of the confusion was due to the fact that many could not see me. I mounted a table to enable these persons to see me. Or on other occasions I pushed my way through the crowd to ease the strain at a particular place where the pressure was great.

I mention these trivial matters because the criticism of these throws a light on other and more important accusations. Something novel happened to which some of the journalists present were not accustomed; they misinterpreted or resented it.

So also with my speeches. There was occasional misreporting as the reporter had apparently not understood my point. But that is a minor matter. The real thing was that my point of view was novel to many. They had probably heard of it but not appreciated it or attached importance to it. And now that it came pointedly and unadorned they were taken aback. They asked me straight questions; was I not to give them straight answers? That indeed would have been a discourtesy to them and to the public.

In my speeches I tried to deal with the Indian problem as scientifically as was possible within the limits of the simple language to be used to large and mixed audiences. I should have liked my critics to point out where my argument went wrong. That would have been more helpful than a vague criticism or resentment. Are we out to understand problems in order to solve them, or to run away from them because we do not like them? I criticised the role of British imperialism in India and I pointed out that Indian nationalism was struggling for independence. That is the very basis of our freedom struggle and it would be absurd for me to talk of India if I did not make this clear. People may differ from us; they have every right to do so. But the question is whether important and vital facts should be suppressed because they hurt the tender susceptibilities of the people in the drawing room. For my part I have no liking for the robots who have no will of their own and whose sole function is to echo the words of those in authority. Nor should constituted authority itself encourage them overmuch if it has vision and wants to keep in touch with reality.

I am asked if I am anti-British, anti-this, anti-that—questions which show that the questioner is far from understanding the problems of our time. We have grown beyond this anti-stage, I hope, and think of our national and international problems on broader and more fundamental lines. Why should I be anti-British, if by British is meant the British people? I owe a good deal to them personally, I am attached to their language and literature, I have many friends among them. But I am against imperialism and empire, wherever they may exist, because I think they come in the way of the world's progress.

If we are not just satisfied with things as they are—and is there any intelligent or sensitive person who is?—then we must try to understand as dispassionately as possible the world's problems and throw our weight on the side which seems to us to offer a solution. In Malaya with its

abundant natural resources I have felt, strangely enough even more than elsewhere, the tragedy of the world. For Malaya came to represent to me for the moment the natural wealth of the world. With this great store that nature has provided us with, and with the enormous power to exploit these resources through science and industry, could we not make of this world of ours a paradise for all? And yet, in spite of all this present plenty and future promise of far more, we quarrel over trifles, and man exploits man and nation exploits nation, and the fearful prospect of international catastrophe darkens our lives. But the day will come when we shall find the way out of this complicated maze and cooperate with each other to the common advantage and advancement of man.

21. Indians and Sinhalese in Malaya[1]

A question has often been put to me as to the contacts that should exist between the Indians and Ceylonese in Malaya. An interview with me that has recently appeared in the press contains one or two statements in regard to this matter which are liable to create some misapprehension and so I should like to express myself clearly on this subject.

Nationalist as I am in regard to Indian freedom, I do not look upon contacts with other peoples from a narrow nationalist viewpoint. My very nationalism is based on an internationalism, and I am very conscious of the fact that the modern world, with its science and world trade and swift methods of transport, is based on internationalism. No country or people can isolate themselves from the rest of the world, and if they attempt it, they do so at their peril and the attempt is bound to fail in the end. I do not believe in a narrow autarchy. But the internationalism that I look forward to is not one of common subjection, imposed from above, but a union and a cooperation of free nations for the common good. It is this kind of world order that will bring peace and progress to mankind.

Force of circumstances makes us in India act and think on the nationalist plane. That is inevitable for all Indians wherever they might live, for our primary objective must be national freedom. But I want them

1. Statement to the press, Singapore, 2 June 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 13 June 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 175-177.

to develop at the same time the international habit of mind and to develop contacts with other countries and peoples. We have a big part to play in the future. Let us prepare ourselves for it.

These contacts will inevitably be greater with those countries and peoples with whom we have common interests and whose world policy might ultimately coincide with ours. Thus I think that India and China have a great deal in common and their future cooperation will not only be advantageous to both, but of benefit to the world at large.

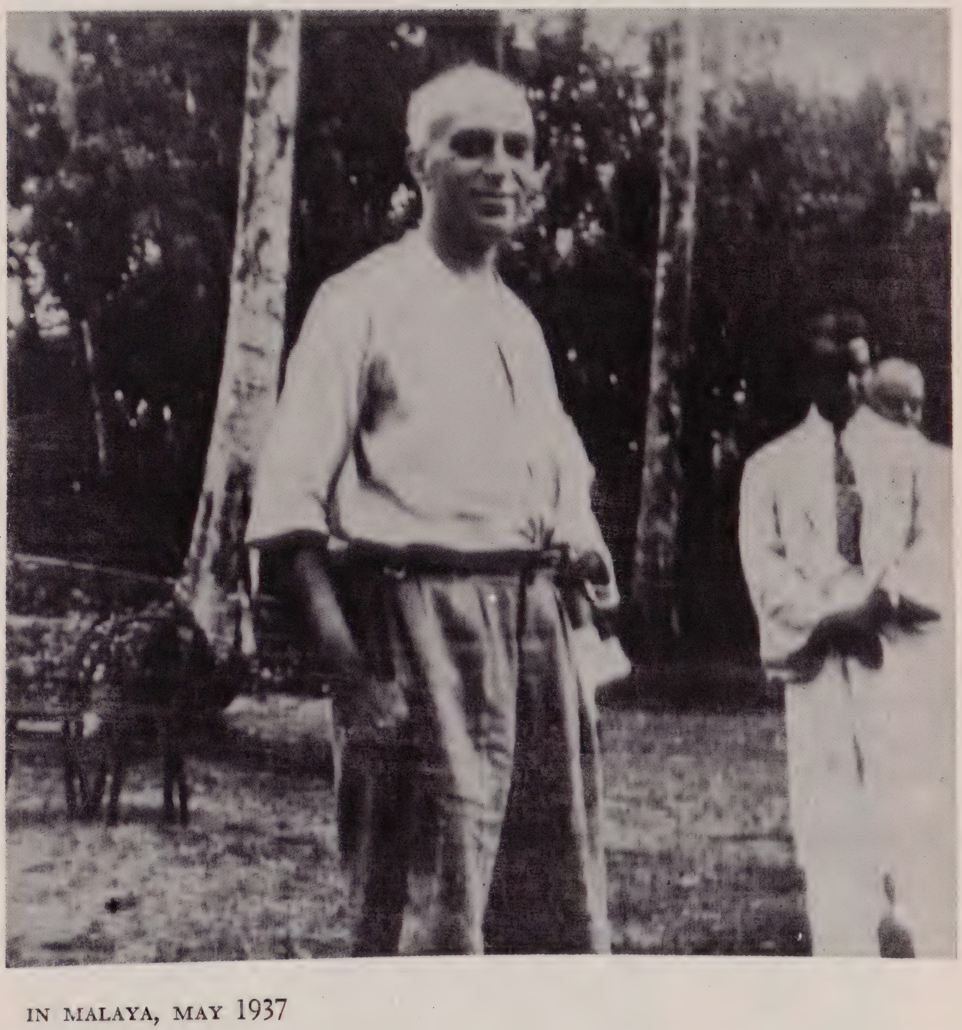
I have therefore urged upon Indians in Malaya to develop the closest cooperation with the Malayans and the Chinese as well as others living in this country. The Ceylonese are nearer to us in many ways than any other people outside India and it is only natural that our association with them should be close. I make no distinction in this matter between the Jaffna Tamils and the Sinhalese or other Ceylonese. India has been a kind of elder sister to Ceylon for long ages past.

This should be the general outlook of the Indians here. But it is obvious that cooperation to develop on sound lines must be based on some common policy. A so-called cooperation mainly thinking in terms of jobs or privileged positions for a few persons is not true cooperation; it is nearly allied to jobbery and I am not interested in it. Strength comes to a community from self-reliance and not from a few state jobs that might be given to it. Even the state jobs come ultimately more to those who have this strength and self-reliance.

Cooperation must also be in both ill fortune and good fortune. To share in the good fortune and to exploit the other's ill fortune is not cooperation and does not enhance the good name of a community.

There seems to have been some argument as to whether Ceylon Tamils should be classed as Indians. Some such interpretation has apparently been given in Malaya. This seems to be wrong in fact and likely to create a split among the Ceylonese which is not desirable. It is obviously not true in the political sense of the word. But a more important consideration is that such an interpretation will encourage a cleavage among the people of Ceylon and we should be no parties to this. We want the people of Ceylon to weld themselves into a strong unit, which will live in close cooperation and friendship with India. If the Ceylonese and Indians are to be classed together for any purpose we have no objection. We would welcome this as we would welcome an even larger association. But let this be done in a straight way by calling them Indians and Ceylonese and not by way of subterfuge or forced interpretation.

In regard to the children of the soil, it is right that their interests should have precedence over others. But if Indians or others are born



IN MALAYA, MAY 1937

IN PYUNTAZA, BURMA, MAY 1937

here and have made Malaya their permanent home, why should they not be considered also as children of the soil?

22. To Fellow Countrymen in Malaya[1]

During my brief stay in this green and pleasant land I have addressed many audiences and had my say about many matters. I have discussed the present condition of India and what we are doing there and I have ventured to suggest what Indians in Malaya might do. Inevitably they have been vague suggestions and generalisations, for specific problems can be dealt with in detail only by a person more acquainted with them than I could claim to be. On the eve of my departure from Malaya, as the train is carrying us to Penang, I am attempting to put some of these suggestions into more definite shape. I have already written separately about Indian labour here and the desirability of close contacts between Indians and others.[2]

Indians here have three duties to face, three kinds of responsibilities to shoulder—their duty to India, their duty to Malaya, their duty to themselves. The three are not mutually exclusive; they overlap and each helps the other.

Their duty to India is to keep in intimate touch with current events there, to take living interest in our freedom struggle, and to help it in such ways as are possible to them. Obviously they cannot do much from here, but for their own sakes they should try to swim in the current of national progress and derive strength and vitality from it. If they look forward, as they must, to share in the triumph when it comes, they must be prepared to carry some of the burdens also. Their future is after all intimately and irrevocably bound up with the future of India. On India's freedom depends their status, the protection of their interests, and the place they occupy in the world. How can they help? Financially, of course. Also by observing our national days, using khaddar, by the display of our national flag at Indian functions. Khaddar is not an economic proposition in Malaya. It must cost more than other imported cloth or silk. But it has become the symbol of our freedom

1. This article was written on the eve of his departure from Malaya on 4 June 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle,* 15 June 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India,* (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 188-194.
2. See pp. 678-684.

struggle and of our association with the masses, and those who use it consciously show their allegiance to both these ideals of ours, which are in effect one. And if they pay a little more, let them remember that the money largely goes to poor Indian spinners and weavers.

All Indians could and should do this, whether they are local born or not. For the local born are as much children of India as others and India's freedom must be as dear to them.

Their duty to Malaya is to live in friendship and fullest cooperation with the children of the soil, with the Chinese, and with all others who live here. They must consider the interests of Malaya as their own, for Malaya has become their land by birth or adoption, and must work for the progress of this country in every way. The people of the soil must feel that we come to cooperate with them and not to injure their interests in any way. If India is their first love demanding allegiance and sacrifice for her cause, Malaya is dear to them also; and indeed the very love of India should lead them to friendship with these lands and their peoples with whom India has had such close contacts from the dawn of history, and whose interests are so nearly allied to hers.

Lastly, their duty to themselves. My first reaction here was not a very favourable one. I found too many small Indian groups functioning separately. There was no conflict between these groups but nevertheless, they weakened the community. Strength requires a larger unity comprising all these groups, all those who look to India as their common motherland. Therefore the primary need for Indians is to build up this larger unity organisationally and to develop contacts—social, political, business—between Indians from all parts of our homeland. To the extent that they succeed in doing this will they be respected by others and have their voice heard in matters of importance.

A larger number of Indians here belong to the labouring class and our future in Malaya is thus closely bound up with the future of Indian labour here. It is necessary therefore that middle class Indians should seek to serve the labouring masses in every way and remain in close touch with them, so that they may know their needs and wants and might help them in their struggle. I have suggested elsewhere the desirability of forming workers' unions. In cities probably these would be more feasible to begin with than elsewhere. Far-sighted employers should welcome them for they can then deal with responsible organisations and bodies of labour rather than with a disorganised mass. Such trade unions need not be confined to Indian workers only for the cause of labour is not racial. Racial or purely national unions are apt to be exploited against each other. Therefore, as far as possible, unions should comprise all the labour in an industry.

It is the business of the state to provide free education and medical facilities for all. In a rich country like Malaya this is easily possible but none the less conditions being what they are we must help ourselves where the state fails to perform its functions. For education is a vital matter for a community and all its future depends on the human material it produces and trains. In this matter the Chinese in Malaya have set a fine example by putting up innumerable up-to-date schools. Why should not the Indians follow? This is necessary from another point of view also. In the existing state schools the Indian languages are not taught, nor indeed has India any place in them. (For the moment I exclude the Tamil schools for Indian workers.) This means that our boys and girls grow up cut off from India and denationalised to some extent. In our own schools there would be an important place for Hindustani, our national language, as well as for the mother tongue of the students. Such schools, I would suggest, should cater for all Indians and should not be confined to one provincial or religious group. We do not want sectarianism in our education. Indeed if our schools are good enough and attract non-Indians, I would welcome them.

For the present when even good schools are lacking, to think in terms of colleges is premature. But obviously we cannot end the education of our children at the school stage. It surprises me how limited are the facilities for higher education in this country in spite of its wealth. There is not a single university and only one training college and one medical college. Some young men and women may go abroad for higher studies—to India or foreign countries. But it is absurd to expect any considerable number to be in a position to go to other countries. Thus in effect the people of the country, Indians as well as non-Indians, have no opportunities to pursue their studies further.

Apart from general cultural education, technical and scientific training is essential for a country with such large mineral and forest resources. Otherwise it can only remain, as it is largely at present, a producer of raw material, and not one that makes the manufactured article. For expert work it will always have to seek people from abroad. This is a humiliating future for any country.

This question of higher and technical education is of course one for all the people of Malaya. It is not confined to Indians. But Indians should think of it and should cooperate with other communities to remove this strange and surprising lack of the most essential condition of modern progress.

Something that I feel should be done almost immediately is for Indians to open public libraries and reading rooms, providing Indian newspapers, journals and books. To begin with, reading rooms should be opened,

as these are not costly, and gradually libraries should be built up around them. I am told that some of the Indian associations get newspapers from India. That is not enough. The reading rooms should be open to the public, including non-Indians, who should be invited to interest themselves in Indian affairs. Such reading rooms and libraries would go some way to keep the Indian population of Malaya in touch with current events in India.

There are, I believe, some Indian-owned newspapers in Malaya which give Indian news. Such newspapers are desirable both in the Indian languages and in English. Newspapers are the ears and voice of a community. Without them a community is deaf and dumb and consequently helpless and powerless. Therefore, I hope that our countrymen will build up high-class and stable newspapers and journals.

I have recommended strongly that Indians here should take to khaddar wearing. For this purpose khaddar depots should be opened where good and reliable khadi can be obtained without intermediate profiteering. The All India Spinners Association or its branches should be consulted about this. These khaddar depots might also stock other Indian goods.

These are some suggestions which I make for the consideration of my countrymen and countrywomen here. I would add that in all these matters we expect Indian women to take a prominent part. Ours is not just a men's movement in India. Women have played and are playing a brave and outstanding part in it.

In ending this article I should like to remind all my countrymen that if they wish to share in the honour and privilege of being India's children, they must be prepared to shoulder the responsibilities that always accompany privileges. Wherever in this wide world there goes an Indian, there also goes a bit of India with him, and he may not forget this or ignore it. By his actions India will be judged. He has it in his power to some extent to bring credit or discredit to his country, honour or dishonour. Let him keep this in mind always and let him bear himself with dignity in good fortune and ill fortune alike. India wants freedom and friendship with the world, and for that we labour; we are no humble suppliants for anybody's favour. We are no citizens of a mean country, but of a noble land with a great past and, let us hope, with a greater future. That future beckons to all of us. Who will not answer that call?

23. Imperialism in Malaya and India[1]

Question: Has economic and social success of what might be described as British imperialism in this country led you to modify your views on the situation in India?

Jawaharlal Nehru: It is a doubtful proposition to advance. Social success is measurable by how wealth is applied and where that wealth goes. British imperialism, as in other countries, has succeeded in so far as the present system could succeed in exploiting natural resources and thereby producing wealth.

Wealth in Malaya lies on top, and one has merely to scoop it up. It is astonishing that education is so poor in Malaya. It should be bristling with industrial and technical schools and other forms of higher education. The crux of the problem however is that one cannot condemn anything as being bad. I am a socialist but it would be absurd for me to condemn capitalism. In my opinion, capitalism has ceased to fit in with the existing conditions. Hence all the world's troubles today.

The Government of India Act has been passed in spite of Indian opposition which also included the moderate elements. India is being forced into a steel cage from which she cannot escape constitutionally. The Congress is particularly opposed to the sections dealing with federal matters.

Meanwhile, we are prepared to utilise the new provincial structure to increase the strength of the Indian people.

It appears that Mr. Gandhi has made the position still clearer by stating that if the government demanded the resignation of the ministers that in itself would be tantamount to dismissal. The Congress is not prepared to accept office under this condition.

As regards the Sastri Report, I would prefer Indians to stay at home and starve rather than go abroad and meet with indignities.

1. Interview to the press, Penang, 4 June 1937. From *The Sunday Times* (a newspaper of Malaya), 6 June 1937.

24. Farewell to Malaya[1]

For thirteen days I have wandered up and down the land of Malaya, enchanted by its beauty and charm. The spell of the country held me in its grip, and though great crowds came to welcome me and I talked to them of many things, my mind could not get rid of that spell and my eyes were always seeking to take their fill of this green and pleasant land where it is always afternoon and the troubles and conflicts of the world seem far away. And now it is time for me to go back to my homeland to face the heavy tasks and shoulder the responsibility that fate and circumstance have cast upon me. I go with regret, but I carry back many treasures with me—the memory of this beautiful country so richly endowed by nature, and far more precious memory of the love and affection that have been showered upon me in such abundant measure. To my own countrymen here of all classes, from the labourer in the field to the merchant or professional person, I find it difficult to express my gratitude. Between us there need be no formal and superficial expressions of thanks, but rather a deeper understanding of each other, and, I hope, a deeper appreciation of each other, bound together as we are by the strong chain of common ideals and objectives. It was this great cause, which I represented to them, that brought them in their tens of thousands to welcome me and which evoked that tremendous enthusiasm which we have seen and felt. It is this cause for which we live and which we shall see triumph. But the welcome that I received came from others also, from the people of the country, the Malayans, and the people of China who live here in such large numbers, and from the Ceylonese who are so near akin to us. To them all I am most grateful. From others I had every courtesy, from the press, from such government officials as I came in contact with, and from the police during my meetings and processions. I wish to express my gratitude to them.

I came here tired and I have had a strenuous time here, except for a brief spell of peace at Port Dickson. But this country and its generous and hospitable inhabitants have refreshed me and I go back rich in mind and fitter in body. This memory will endure for long and cheer me in the days to come.

And so goodbye Malaya, or as I would prefer to have it, *au revoir*.

1. Statement to the press, Butterworth, 4 June 1937. *The Leader*, 18 June 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 195-196.

25. Back Home[1]

It is good to come back home after six weeks of continuous wandering, good to see familiar sights, familiar faces, to rest for more than a day or two in the same place. Some have the wanderlust, and I have it myself in some measure, and I love to get out of the old rut and cross mountains and seas and make acquaintance with new countries, new people. And when one may not do this, as alas too often I may not, I give rein to my imagination and we take long and improbable journeys and seek adventure in distant countries. But the old rut calls us back and we return to the day's routine.

So I was back from Burma and Malaya. There were numerous formidable files awaiting me, and a crowd of letters to answer, and questions and problems which a great organisation has continually to face. Pressmen surrounded me—what had I to say to this or that? Had I seen some statement or other? Was the Congress going to form ministries? And so on interminably. Fortunately I knew little about these various statements and pronouncements and I felt some difficulty in readjusting myself to the old world which I had left but six weeks before. Before my eyes floated still the Shwe Dagon pagoda glistening in the morning sunlight, and the palm trees swaying in the pleasant land of Malaya.

Back to the files and the letters. A summer school has been raided[2] and the lathi has felled down many people. The jute strike is over but the grievances of the jute workers continue.[3] The workers in a match factory of the Swedish trust have been long on strike and are being ill-treated.[4] The problem of the detenus. A Congress committee has been suspended and protests and counter-protests have poured in. Appeals from district committees against certain orders of their provincial committees. There is an interruption and fifty kisans appear on the scene full of their troubles. They cannot be ignored.

Back again to the files. Should kisan organisations be started or should we concentrate on making kisans members of Congress committees? What should be the relation between the Congress committee

1. Allahabad, 19 June 1937. *The Modern Review*, July 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 197-202.
2. See pp. 100 and 249.
3. See p. 252.
4. See p. 257.

and the kisan sabha? Am I in favour of functional representation? Telegrams pour in protesting against the choice of a candidate to contest a bye-election. A long distance trunk call on the telephone comes from south India. Visitors, visitors with nothing worthwhile to say, wasting time. An occasional visitor, who is interesting, taking up more time. And all the while the Shwe Dagon pagoda floating in the air and the gem palace of Mandalay and laughing men and women in gay attire wandering by.

Back to work. Financial matters, confusing and troublesome. Cases of disciplinary action. Some hard ones but discipline has to be maintained in an organisation. Mass contacts, what progress is being made in the villages? What with Muslims in towns and villages? Letters in approval of our new activities, letters in criticism. Are the Congress members of the legislatures working in their constituencies carrying the message of the Congress?

How hot it is, and the paper one writes on sticks to the hand. And how pleasant it was by the sea-side in Malaya with the tide lapping the beach and the palm trees and the graceful areca-nuts fringing the shore.

A conference with colleagues in the office. Cablegrams from abroad. Discussion on foreign affairs. Zanzibar—Indians overseas. Visitors, visitors—hell! Why will so many people come when there is so much to be done? But some are old colleagues and though what they say may be unimportant, they are valued comrades and may not be ignored. Strangers come and who knows whether their business is important or not? Peasants come and who can turn these helpless ones away without a word of cheer?

The situation on the frontier—air-bombing and kidnappings, a curious mixture, and the larger question being somewhat hidden by communal feelings on either side. When will people behave like grown-ups? How childish all this is and religion, as of old, warps the mind and confuses the issue.

A note on Congress work in the Punjab, a complaint from Bombay which takes up time. Visitors asking me to visit their districts or attend conferences.

Will the Congress accept ministries? When will the Working Committee meet to consider this question? Wise people, knowing far more than I do, announce that the Committee is meeting within a few days. Evidently they imagine that our main preoccupation is to think about and discuss this question of ministries. They would be surprised to find how little this has to do with our work and how many other activities claim our attention. And those who question may be still further surprised if they had a glimpse into my mind.

For my mind goes back over the heads of the visitors and questioners and across the files to those six weeks that are gone past recall, days full of wandering in strange places, old world and new, crowded days. And pictures of the past come up before me when the beautiful palace at Mandalay hummed with play and laughter, and behind this hid many an intrigue and cruelty, and the rapid decay of an order that had lived its time. That gem palace is empty today, shorn of its gems, and only ghosts and memories fill its deserted halls. The teak roofs and pillars stand as of old, but they are dead wood and no more. The past they represent is gone for ever.

But the Shwe Dagon pagoda still towers in all its strength and beauty over the city of Rangoon and gives its ageless message to all who come under its spell. It shines in the morning sunlight and glimmers as the evening shadows fall, and we creep away from Burma reverently with this image of the soul of a people impressed on our minds and hearts.

26. To the Editor, The Times of Malaya[1]

Sir,

A friend in Malaya has drawn my attention to an article in your issue of July 13th under the caption: 'Nehru did not answer'. I was not aware that a question had previously been put to me which I had failed to answer. But now that it has been brought to my notice I gladly answer it.

Having dabbled somewhat in history I have found that dominant and imperialist nations and dominant classes do not leave their privileged positions by considerations of justice, or by sweet argument and smiles, and least of all in response to a beggar's bowl. They hold on to what they have got and exploit their subject nations or classes for their own advantage. These subject nations or classes, not unnaturally, object to this process and want a place in the sun for themselves. There is conflict, and in the past this conflict has almost always been a bloody one.

I seem to remember that certain classes in England, once upon a time, rebelled against their king, who had presumed too much, and cut off his head. Subsequently these classes, wanting power, chased another

1. Allahabad, 25 July 1937. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. *The Times of Malaya* was a newspaper published in Ipoh.

king of theirs out of England. In France also the head of a king fell in the conflict between the rising middle classes and the old landed aristocracy. Of national upheavals against foreign rule the instances are legion. Perhaps I might mention Mazzini and Garibaldi in Italy, and the Greek struggle for freedom against the Turks. I mention these two instances because they roused tremendous enthusiasm in England. The rebels were claimed as heroes and patriots and feted as such.

History thus seems to teach us that if a country or class wants to attain freedom, it must resist the dominant power and seek to dispossess it. In order to do this effectively and successfully it must develop the strength and the organisation for it. In the past this resistance has been of the violent and armed variety and it has been generally recognised as justified.

In India we are under alien imperialist rule and we seek to get rid of it. We want our country to be independent. We must therefore develop the strength and organisation so that the will of the Indian people shall prevail as against foreign authority. But we have deliberately set our faces against armed revolt, for a number of reasons which I need not discuss in detail here, and tried to develop a peaceful technique of struggle. The whole basis of our struggle is thus a peaceful one, but nevertheless it is a dynamic struggle which relies on the organised strength of the masses. Perhaps *The Times of Malaya* has heard of non-cooperation and civil disobedience. They are the peaceful equivalent of armed rebellion. For any country desiring to be free from foreign rule the choice lies between these two methods. We have chosen the peaceful and more civilised course while all the highly cultured nations of Europe arm to the teeth and prepare to murder each other.

"Strong enough for what?" you ask me. Strong enough to have our way despite all opposition, strong enough for the will of the Indian people to prevail in India instead of that of British imperialism, strong enough to make India free and independent.

Yours etc.,
Jawaharlal Nehru

13

THE WORLD SITUATION

1. Message to the Left Book Club[1]

I offer greetings to the Left Book Club[2] on the occasion of the rally for world peace and against fascism.[3]

The people of India stand whole-heartedly for world peace and against the menace of fascism. They have suffered long enough under crushing imperialism. For them there can be no world peace so long as imperialism and fascism hold sway.

1. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 8 February 1937.
2. The Left Book Club was organized by Victor Gollancz, the socialist publisher of London.
3. It was held at the Albert Hall in London on 7 February 1937.

2. Food for Spain[1]

Our elections have absorbed our attention and most of us have thought of little else during the past few weeks. But now that the elections are over we must look around again and take cognizance of the world drama which pursues its tragic course and threatens world-wide catastrophe. We must do so primarily because the peril faces us as it faces others, because the same basic forces are in conflict elsewhere as in India, and the outcome of that conflict will affect us and mould our future. This conflict of world forces is most evident in Spain where bloody and inhuman war has waged for over seven months, and where a brutal fascism and militarism has sought to crush and annihilate Spanish people. They have failed in their endeavour; for the Spanish people, hungry, ill-armed, lacking trained leadership, have yet put up such a magnificent fight that they have confounded their enemies, and shown afresh what the masses can do when they fight for their own freedom. The defence of Madrid for over three months has already taken its place in history, an inspiration to those who hunger and struggle for freedom. All the forces of reaction, the fascist powers, foreign legionaries, mercenaries, the farce of non-intervention, have struck hard at Madrid and

1. Allahabad, 20 February 1937. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. First printed in the Indian press on 22 February 1937 and reprinted with a few changes in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 265-267.

Spain, but the spirit of that great city still stands high—indomitable, invincible, a bright flame—though ruins and death and starvation encompass it.[2]

Whatsoever might be the ultimate fate of this epic struggle, the people of Spain have written history with their hearts' blood and heroic courage. Out of this precious material they have built up, in the midst of suffering and disaster, the great people's front and the people's militia which has held the gates of Madrid, for those gates have become the symbols of human liberty.

But the Spanish war is no longer a Spanish affair. The rival forces of the world fight for mastery there. Fascism fights anti-fascism; militarism seeks to crush democracy. In this struggle British imperialism, with its so-called policy of non-intervention, has hindered and obstructed the Spanish people in their fight for freedom. But everywhere the lovers of freedom, the exploited of the world, have raised their voices in defence of the Spanish people, and have sent such help as they could—ambulance corps, medical supplies, food supplies and even volunteers. The International Brigade of Volunteers,[3] drawn from all countries, has demonstrated magnificently the solidarity of the people of the world with the Spanish masses, and many of them have found a last resting-place, with their Spanish comrades, on Spanish soil which they defended with their lives.

What of us in India? We are not indifferent; we cannot be indifferent to courage and heroism in the cause of human freedom. We cannot forget that our own larger interests are involved, our own freedom for which we labour is at stake. For fascism and imperialism march hand in hand; they are blood brothers. The victory of either is the victory of both all over the world.

We have already expressed our deep sympathy and solidarity with the Spanish people in many ways. The National Congress has given eloquent expression to the Indian people's voice and feelings.[4] But that is not enough. We must translate our sympathy into active and material help. We are poor and hungry folk, crushed under many burdens, dominated by an arrogant imperialism, and we struggle ourselves for freedom. But even in our poverty and misery we feel for our Spanish

2. The rebel forces of Spain had beseiged Madrid, the capital and Republican stronghold.
3. It was formed to help the Spanish Republican Army in its struggle against the rebels. The volunteers were drawn from over fifty nations including India.
4. The Faizpur Congress passed a resolution assuring the solidarity of the people of India with the Spanish people in their struggle for liberty.

comrades and we must give them what aid we can, howsoever little this might be. We can help in sending them medical supplies and food. I trust it will be possible for us to arrange to send grain and other food supplies, and I appeal to those who deal in such food-stuffs for their cooperation in this matter.

In London our countrymen have formed a Spain-India Committee[5] with Syt. V.K. Krishna Menon as chairman and Mrs. Saklatvala[6] as treasurer. I suggest that for the present we might send money to them for the purchase and dispatch of medical supplies. I am glad to say that I have already been able to send £115, contributed chiefly by friends in Bombay. I trust that contributions for this purpose will be forthcoming from all parts of the country. They will be received and acknowledged by Dr. R.M. Lohia, Foreign Department, All India Congress Committee, Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad. It will be for us to consider later what other form or shape we can give to our help to the Spanish people. But, apart from money, food is urgently needed and the call for it has come to me repeatedly.

5. The committee was formed in January 1937; in September 1937, the committee presented a Red Cross ambulance for use in Spain.
6. Sehri Saklatvala, widow of Shapurji Saklatvala.

3. A Letter about Spain[1]

War, bloody and brutal civil war, rages in Spain and anxiously we await the day's news. We have seen to what heights the masses can rise when they fight for freedom and their own emancipation; we have watched with amazement the heroic and disciplined sacrifices of the Spanish people in their struggle against fascist, military and reactionary cliques and adventurers. But perhaps nothing brings out more clearly the fundamental difference in the outlook of the rival forces than other activities almost unconnected with the war which take place behind the fronts and which are seldom reported. The rebels have made a point of bombing the buildings containing the famous art treasures of Spain, while the Spanish Government, though fighting for life, has yet devoted time and energy to the protection of these invaluable treasures. More significant still is the way the government is tackling big problems. Only

1. Allahabad, 24 February 1937. Published in the Indian press on 2 March 1937.

recently I gave publicity to a passage in a letter written to me by Mr. Horace Alexander, the well-known member of the Society of Friends. In this he said that he had been to Barcelona recently. "I was much impressed," he writes, "with the efficiency, orderliness and vigour of the 'red' authorities there. In spite of the war they seem to be tackling such problems as the vast influx of refugees, the problem of the beggars and destitution, etc., most effectively, and I saw no sign of violence or terror, though I met a number of people who were definitely *not* 'red', such as the protestant pastors, but who were whole-heartedly pro-government". One wishes that our benign government in India possessed a fraction of this efficiency and vigour in tackling our problems of destitution, poverty and unemployment!

I have just received a letter from my daughter, Indira, from England, which I find so interesting that I want to share it with others. In this letter she gives an account of a talk which a lady visitor from Spain gave to her school. This lady—Dr. Komas—is a lecturer in biology at the University of Barcelona. Her home was in Majorca which was taken by the rebels at an early stage. For six months Dr. Komas had no news whatever of her relatives and later the briefest of information. She has suffered considerably during the war, but Indira writes that she spoke quietly and without any sign of emotion. I quote below from Indira's letter:

> Dr. Komas said little about the war itself, apart from briefly sketching its background. She spoke of what interested her most: children and education. She told us of the groups of people who were trying to shield the children of Spain from the horrors of war, to give them as calm an education and as healthy a life as possible in the circumstances. Big colonies have been founded in Barcelona and Valencia for children and here the littlest ones are sent by train from Madrid and the surrounding villages in the hands of the government. In these colonies there are schools; the children are clothed and fed. Many of them wear new clothes for the first time in their lives. The Barcelona booksellers told Dr. Komas that they had never before sold so many children's books. Food is scarce but the grown-ups manage with biscuits and anything else that they can get while all the milk and bread available are sent to the colonies for the children. The main difficulty so far is the transport of the children, for the trains are very slow and the journey is made much longer by the necessity of having to avoid the fighting fronts. One would hardly expect Madrid to rejoice during Christmas or the New Year, but the government said that the children should not

be disappointed. A 'Children's Week' was organised. Everybody gave voluntary help and during that week the children had their cinema shows and games. Every child received a toy—many for the first time. 'We tried to make them happy', said Dr. Komas, 'and their smiling faces gave us renewed courage and strength; they made us happy and we were glad that all that was possible was being done for their safety and welfare.' But this was only in the day-time. At night they woke up at the sound of bombs—the little ones cried and the older ones remembered the terrible scenes of war. Dr. Komas showed us the Children's Week posters and other pictures. Dr. Komas, I found, was very charming . . .

4. To Victor Gollancz[1]

Allahabad
March 10, 1937

My dear Gollancz,[2]
Thank you for your letter of February 8th. I am very glad to learn of the success of the Albert Hall rally. It is astonishing how the Left Book Club has got on. Unfortunately we are outside the pale and Left Book Club books are not supposed to be good food for us. And so, while I congratulate you on your success, I envy those who share it with you.
With all good wishes,

Yours fraternally,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (1893-1967); British publisher and organiser of the Left Book Club in 1936; well known for his support of various humanitarian causes.

5. Fascism and Empire[1]

I gladly associate myself with the demonstration organised by the Spain-India Committee at the Kingsway Hall. Spain and the tragedy that is

1. Allahabad, 27 March 1937. Message to the Spain-India Committee on the occasion of a demonstration at the Kingsway Hall, London, on 9 April 1937. *The Hindu*, 10 April 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 122-126.

being enacted there dominate our thoughts today whether we live near-by in the other countries of Europe or in far India. For this tragedy and conflict are not of Spain only but of the wide world, and on what ultimately happens in Spain depends the future of so much that we value. Most people realise now that the Spanish war is no longer a Spanish affair, or a civil war between different groups of Spaniards. It is a European war on Spanish soil or, more correctly, an invasion of Spain by fascist forces and mercenaries from abroad.[2] And so in Spain these rival forces fight for mastery, fascism and anti-fascism, and democracy, crushed in so many countries of Europe, fights desperately for life.

The issue as between Italian fascism and German nazism, on the one hand, and Spanish democracy on the other, seems to be clear enough and I suppose that most people in England, who stand for democracy and freedom, sympathise with the Spanish people. But many of these very people are perhaps not so clear when they consider the policy of the British Government in regard to Spain. And when they go a few steps further and think of the relation of British imperialism to India, all clarity disappears.

And yet the real lesson of Spain is that fascism and imperialism are blood brothers, marching hand in hand, though they may have their faces averted from each other, or may even come into occasional conflict with each other. Englishmen see, more or less, the democratic side of their government functioning in the domestic sphere, and they conclude that elsewhere also their government has this democratic background. But the whole foreign policy of Britain during the last four years has shown that the forces that move it have nothing to do with democracy; they are friendly to the development of the fascist powers, though they have half-heartedly and unsuccessfully tried to check this development occasionally when it seemed to threaten British imperial interests. That is the story of British policy in the Far East, in the shameful betrayal of Abyssinia, in the intrigues of central Europe, and in the farce of non-intervention in Spain, culminating in the open avowal of fascist Italy that it will continue to send its armies to crush the people of Spain.

Many people are bewildered by the seeming inconsistencies and contradictions of British foreign policy, and yet there is no real inconsistency. The inconsistency is in the minds of those who imagine that the democratic background of British domestic policy governs foreign policy

2. In the Spanish civil war, the fascist countries supplied men and material in large quantities to the rebel forces to enable them to break the resistance of the Republican army.

also; or sometimes there is inconsistency in the utterances of foreign ministers and other politicians who juggle with words to delude the public into reconciling these contrary tendencies and policies. In the field of action British foreign policy has pursued consistently and unhesitatingly the path of rapprochement with fascism. All the horror of Spain has not diverted it from its set purpose, the recent blood-curdling massacres in Addis Ababa have not affected it in the slightest degree.[3] Even fear of endangering Britain's international position by the growth of fascist powers in northern and central Europe and in the Mediterranean has not resulted in a marked variation of that policy.

Why is this so? Because essentially imperialism and fascism are close of kin and one merges into the other. Sometimes imperialism has two faces—a domestic one talking the language of democracy, and a colonial one verging into fascism. Of the two, the dominant one is the latter and it ultimately governs larger policies. So we see that whatever government functions in Britain, whether it is a Conservative government or a Labour government or a 'National' government, in India this government wears a fascist uniform. The drift towards fascism continues in India and the new constitution, with all its democratic facade in the provinces, is essentially fascist in conception and probably in action, especially in the federal structure. The only really democratic part of it is the larger electorate in the provinces and this electorate has declared overwhelmingly in favour of scrapping the new Act. But the Act and the constitution continue, and the tremendous majorities elected under this very constitution are powerless and cannot have their way.

Empire and democracy are two incompatibles; one must swallow the other. And in the political and social conditions of the modern world, empire must either liquidate itself or drift to fascism, and, in so drifting, carry its domestic structure with it.

So the question of British imperialism in India is intimately related to British domestic policy and governs the latter. It seems inconceivable that there will be any major social change in Britain so long as the empire flourishes, nor is there likely to be any marked change in foreign policy. It seems more probable that great changes will take place in India, ending in the liquidation of the empire, and these will result in major changes in Britain. Or the two may come more or less simultaneously.

3. Hundreds of Ethiopians, including women and children, were massacred by the Italians following the attempt at assassination of an Italian military commander.

The background of the Spanish struggle therefore is one of world conflict between democracy and the forces of freedom everywhere and fascism and imperialism. That is the lesson Spain teaches in her agony and through her blood and suffering. We who stand for Spain must learn that lesson in all its implications and stand equally for the ending of fascism and empire and all that they signify. We must pull out the root of the trouble.

But while we argue and debate, blood flows in Spain and heroic men and women and even children fight our battles and give their lives for human liberty. Governments deny them the aid that was their due, but the peoples of the world have heard their cry for succour and have responded to it, for was not that cry the cry of the exploited everywhere?

We are ourselves helpless in India and hunger and stark poverty meet us everywhere; we fight for our freedom and to rid ourselves of the empire that exploits and crushes us. Famine and flood and natural calamity have pursued us and added to the burdens of empire. But out of our hunger and poverty we will send what help we can to our comrades in Spain, and though this may not be much, it will carry with it the earnest and anxious good wishes of the people of India. For those who suffer themselves feel most for their brothers in misfortune elsewhere.

6. Appeal for Aid to Spain[1]

We appeal to the people of India, who themselves struggle against imperialism and reaction, to help now and immediately, before it is too late, our Spanish comrades in their struggle for freedom, life and culture.

We can be no parties to this policy and we must understand the true nature of the conflict, its significance and implications. We must give our whole-hearted support to the Spanish people, not only the support of our words and good wishes, but more tangible support which the people of Spain, perishing under fire and gas and by hunger, so urgently need. Unhappily situated as we are, we cannot do much, for we ourselves suffer under the yoke of imperialism and struggle for freedom. But food and medical supplies and money for them we can send.

1. Allahabad, 30 March 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 5 April 1937. Jawaharlal was one of the signatories to this appeal.

With the object of organising our support, and co-ordinating news and propaganda about Spain, on a nation-wide basis, we propose the establishment of a committee for aiding the Spanish people and we appeal to the people of India to help now and immediately.

7. India and China[1]

I am ashamed that physical illness should incapacitate me from keeping my promise and being present at Santiniketan tomorrow for the inauguration ceremony of the Chinese Hall. It has not been so usually with me, and so I gave my word gladly and with full confidence that I would join in this great ceremony, great in the memories of the long past that it invokes, great also in the promise of future comradeship and the forging of new links to bring China and India nearer to each other. What a long past that has been of friendly contacts and mutual influences, untroubled by political conflict and aggression! We have traded in ideas, in art, in culture, and grown richer in our own inheritance by the other's offering. Political subjection came to both of us in varying forms, and stagnation and decay, and at the same time new forces and ideas from the West to wake us out of our torpor. We have been struggling to find a new equilibrium, to rid ourselves of the forces that throttle us, to give expression to the new life that already pulsates through our veins. The whole world seeks that new equilibrium, but the forces of darkness are strong and in the name of fascism and imperialism and their allies seek to crush the spirit of man and all the art and culture that flow from it. But that spirit of man is not easily crushed; it has survived many a barbarous onslaught; it will triumph afresh.

China and India, sister nations from the dawn of history, with their long tradition of culture and peaceful development of ideas, have to play a leading part in this world drama, in which they themselves are so deeply involved. And it is right that they should draw nearer to each other, seek to understand each other afresh and draw strength from their past and present. All understanding to be real must be based on the cultural and ideological background of a country. I welcome,

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 13 April 1937. *The Hindu*, 15 April 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 165-166.

therefore, the inauguration of the Chinese Hall, situated most appropriately at Santiniketan, and I trust that it will be a real meeting ground of the best in China and India. I must offer my grateful thanks to the Chinese scholars and friends who have made the building of this hall with its library possible. I earnestly hope that this hall will lead to ever-widening contacts between the two countries, and that Chinese scholars will come to India and Indian scholars will visit China, and thus set up an ever-flowing stream of mutual understanding which will help us both in the solution of the problems that face us.

8. The Need for Active Support to Spain[1]

For more than seven months, civil war has raged in Spain with almost unparalleled brutality. We, in India, have viewed this struggle with concern, our sympathies have gone out to the Spanish people in the hour of their trial, we have sent messages of goodwill to them. But, on the whole, our interest has lacked warmth and direction. The conflict calls for our closer attention, and some action on our part; for it vitally concerns the interests of the Indian people. The forces in bloody conflict in Spain are essentially the same as are in conflict in India, and they threaten a catastrophe to the world and to India. The people of Spain are today defending their newly-won democratic freedom against a host of reactionaries and militarists, who are openly supported by the fascist governments of Germany, Italy and Portugal. British imperialism has indirectly aided the reactionary rebels in Spain by its policy of non-intervention.

The Spanish people, poor, almost unarmed and untrained, have with indomitable will and courage faced these militarist rebels, marching with mercenaries and foreign legionaries and supplied with the latest and most horrible engines of warfare. In the course of their heroic struggle, they have built up their great bulwark, the people's front, and have organised the people's militia. Madrid, after three months of siege and continuous attack, broken up and ruined by bombardment and aerial attack, still stands unconquered, the city victorious, whose gates are defended by the unshaken and fierce determination of the people.

Millions of people throughout the world, lovers of freedom and the exploited of all races, have responded to the call of the Spanish people.

1. Calcutta, 20 April 1937. *The Hindu*, 22 April 1937. Jawaharlal was one of the signatories to this appeal.

The diplomacy of British imperialism, subtle and Machiavellian, has, through its so-called policy of non-intervention, lent support to the fascist countries in their adventures in Spain. So it has sought to protect its large financial interests in Spain and its wider imperialist interests elsewhere. This policy threatens to draw the Indian people on to the side of imperialism and reaction.

9. To J. Mascaro[1]

Allahabad
April 22, 1937

Dear Mr. Mascaro,[2]
Thank you for your letter. Indeed I remember meeting you in Ceylon very well. As for Spain there is no question of your thanking me or my thanking you. The fight in Spain is a fight in which all who are interested in democracy and freedom must give their support and sympathy.

Should you come to India I shall be happy to meet you. Do send me your translations of the *upanishads* when they are published.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. A student at Cambridge of Indian religions. He later translated some of the Indian classical literature into English. In his letter of 31 March 1937, Mascaro recalled his meeting with Jawaharlal in Ceylon in 1931.

10. Further Appeal for Help to Spain[1]

Crisis is a much hackneyed word in this world of today for everywhere there is crisis, continuing, persistent, threatening crisis and feverish preparation for the catastrophe that all fear and yet cannot avert. In India we are in the middle of a crisis and the wheels of the gods move slowly but inevitably to future conflicts between our urge to freedom and

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 24 April 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 26 April 1937.

the imperialism which binds us. We cannot shirk them and we will meet them in the days to come with courage and with the strength that our people have shown so often before. Yet, engrossed as we are in our own struggle, we may not forget the tragedy of Spain where freedom and democracy fight for breath and life. All the world watches anxiously the issue of this struggle for on it depends so much that we care for. This issue will have its far-reaching consequences everywhere, and not least on our own struggle for freedom in India. By helping the people of Spain we help ourselves and our freedom movement. We have just learnt with pride that a hundred countrymen of ours are fighting in the ranks of the International Brigade for the people and Government of Spain. I have recently had news that an old colleague of ours, Dr. M. Atal, has gone to Spain to give his medical services to the wounded and to the starving. In Bilbao women and children starve and the might of the British Empire bows down before the insurgents.[2] Or is it that the British Government sympathises with and indirectly supports these insurgents?

I venture to appeal again to the people of India to give all the help they can to support this struggle for freedom in Spain. Our A.I.C.C. office in Allahabad will gladly receive contributions and pass them on immediately to the proper quarters.

2. Delay in despatch of food supplies to the besieged city of Bilbao by the British caused considerable difficulties to the people, and the city ultimately fell to the rebels in June 1937.

11. To Govind Madgavkar[1]

Allahabad
August 26, 1937

My dear Sir Govind,

Gandhiji showed me your letter to him in Wardha.[2] The question of sending an envoy on behalf of the Congress to foreign countries has not been considered by us. The matter is full of difficulties as in foreign countries, especially in Europe, the division between rival groups is very marked. Not only are countries aligning against each other but inside

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(2)/1937, p. 353, N.M.M.L.
2. Govind Madgavkar, in his letter of 12 August 1937 to Mahatma Gandhi, offered to serve the country abroad.

the country there is the same alignment. A visitor from India cannot remain wholly neutral and if he remains so he carries little weight with both groups. Thus it becomes necessary to develop a definite foreign policy. To some extent such a development has gradually taken place. But it is still vague. Invitations sometimes come to us from organisations and international conferences. But the very nature of such invitations to some extent commits us to a certain policy. Last year we were represented at an International Peace Congress held in Paris.[3] This was an anti-fascist organisation and we had no hesitation in joining it because we agreed with the general background.

Personally I do not think that it is desirable for us to adopt a neutral attitude in regard to world problems. For instance, in regard to China and Japan, I think we should definitely express our fullest sympathy for China, although of course we cannot do much for her. In the same way in Europe I feel that we should align ourselves with the anti-fascist forces.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 576-577.

12. To A. E. Shohet[1]

Allahabad
August 26, 1937

Dear Mr. Shohet,[2]
Thank you for your letter and the copy of the *Jewish Advocate* which you sent me. I should like to write on the Palestine problem, but I am too full of other work at present. Perhaps a little later I might write to the press on this subject.

It has always seemed to me that this problem should be settled by mutual consultation between Arab and Jewish leaders. Unfortunately in the past the Jewish leaders have relied too much on British support as against the Arabs and have thus, in the eyes of the Arabs, become supporters of British imperialism in Palestine. It seems to me clear that

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(2)/1937, p. 363, N.M.M.L.
2. Editor, *Jewish Advocate*, published from Bombay.

the proposed partition is utterly bad and is bound to create more trouble in the future.[3] It is certainly not a solution of the problem. A real solution must be based on the following factors: (1) independence of Palestine, (2) recognition of the fact that Palestine is an Arab country and therefore Arabs must have a predominant voice in it, and (3) recognition of the fact that the Jews in Palestine are an integral factor and their rights should be protected.

I feel sure that there is no inherent conflict between the Arabs and the Jews and that if the matter is approached in a spirit of cooperation, a mutually satisfactory solution can be found. That solution cannot be based on the interests of British imperialism. These third party interests will always tend to widen the gap between the Arabs and the Jews and, in the name of protecting one against the other, in reality to protect British imperialism at the cost of the other two.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. The Peel Commission in its report published in July 1937 recommended the partition of Palestine into three areas: a Jewish state, an Arab state and a mandated territory consisting of Jerusalem and a corridor to the sea at Jaffa.

13. Zanzibar and the Boycott of Cloves[1]

For some years past the problem of Indians settled in Zanzibar has been before the country. The British Government of the colony, supported by the Colonial Office in London, has been devising laws and regulations which crush Indian trade and will ruin the Indian community in Zanzibar. Our countrymen there refused to submit tamely to this process of squeezing out, and they protested with all their might. They looked to India for sympathy and help in their trials, and they did not look in vain. The people of India responded to that call and at innumerable meetings expressed their solidarity with their countrymen in Zanzibar. The Congress gave emphatic expression to this feeling and passed numerous resolutions in support of the cause of Indians in Zanzibar. Even the Government of India appeared to sympathise and considered the

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 28 August 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 1 September 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 276-282.

proposed legislation as a menace to Indian interests and a breach of previous agreements. But the wheels of the Imperial Government and the Colonial Office moved on, regardless of Indian interests, and the legislation was passed with minor variations.[2]

Ruin faces the 15,000 Indians in Zanzibar and they have resolved not to submit to this usurpation of their rights. A month ago they started their campaign of passive resistance against these measures and they are carrying on their peaceful and gallant struggle. They have voluntarily gone out of the port trade in cloves in which they have been traditionally engaged. The Working Committee of the Congress, at its last meeting, called upon the people of India to help their countrymen in every way and demanded an embargo on the entry of cloves into India. Further they asked the people to boycott cloves so long as this problem was not settled to the satisfaction of Indian interests. This was the least that our people could do to help our countrymen abroad in their hour of trial.

The Government of India meanwhile has veered round from its old position and has become an apologist of the new legislation in Zanzibar which creates a clove monopoly. Probably it had to do so because of pressure from the imperial government, of which it is a subordinate branch. But it is surprising to find that certain elected members of the Central Assembly should have also forsaken the Zanzibar Indians and helped the government in opposing the demand for an embargo. The arguments advanced by them showed an astonishing and pro-imperialist bent of mind.[3] Those who oppose India's struggle for freedom, thereby supporting British imperialism in India, usually support this imperialism abroad also, even at the cost of Indian interests.

It is utterly wrong to say that our struggle in Zanzibar is to protect Indian vested interests as against the interests of the people of the country. The Congress holds by the principle that in every country the interests of the people of that country must be dominant and must have

2. As the clove growers association's monopoly of the trade was being resented by Indian traders, the Government of India protested to the British Government against the proposed legislation guaranteeing the association's monopoly. As a result, some concessions were obtained, but these being inadequate, the Zanzibar Indians appealed to the Congress for help. The Congress, supporting their demands, called upon Indian traders to boycott clove imports from Zanzibar.

3. For instance, Jinnah, expressing his doubt whether the government deserved to be censured, said in the Central Assembly on 23 August 1937 that so far as he had followed it, the scheme "is at any rate intended to safeguard the interests of the Indians fairly without in any way prejudicing the objective, namely, that the relief must be given to the growers as far as possible...."

first consideration. We apply that principle to India and therefore we cannot tolerate any foreign interests imposing their will on us. We apply that principle to other countries also and we would willingly put an end to Indian interests there if they conflict with those of the people of the country. But we are not prepared to submit to, and we shall fight, any attempt to injure Indian interests for the advancement of British imperialism. In Zanzibar it is this imperialism that is functioning and it is in its interests that the changes have been made. An anti-Indian clove monopoly has been established to enrich the British monopolist at the expense of the Indian small trader. The Zanzibar distillery, which is an imperialist British concern, is in a position to buy from the monopolist association clove stems at half the rate that would otherwise have been obtainable in a free foreign market.

Secondly, it is notorious that Britain's colonial administration, as that of India, is exceedingly expensive, extravagant and top-heavy. To keep this running and to find money for it, the people are heavily taxed. The burden falls especially on the poor. In many African colonies the iniquitous 'hut-tax' or a 'poll-tax' is imposed on the poorest to enable the administration to pay heavy salaries and allowances to its officials who are usually Britishers. Sir George Maxwell,[5] a distinguished public servant of Malaya, has recently pointed out the scandal of these expensive and over-staffed administrations run at the cost of improverishing the already poor and of stinting the barest expenditure on public works, public health, education and other essential public services. He gives many startling figures from Malaya and Africa. One colony with a total population of 3,001 (men, women and children) maintains a heavily paid Governor and Commander-in-Chief and numerous officials. But we need not cross the seas for such instances; we have remarkable examples in our own country.

Zanzibar has put up with such an expensive over-staffed British administration. Like Topsy, it "growed", fattening on the prosperity of the clove trade, which had been built up by Indian industry. Every boom period was taken advantage of to add to the number or emoluments of the army administrators. Then came the slump and it was not so easy for the unhappy country to shoulder this heavy burden. Instead of reducing the number of big officials and the amounts paid to them in

4. In many African colonies, the poll and hut taxes were imposed on the Africans both to force them to go out to work for their 'white' employers and to raise revenue.
5. (1871-1959); a British civil servant who served in Malaya for several years and retired as chief secretary in 1926; was later vice-chairman of the slavery committee of the League of Nations.

salaries and allowances and thus making the administration fit in to some extent with the necessities and realities, fresh sources of revenue—not for public works or education—but to keep the administration running in the old way were anxiously sought after. Further taxation was out of the question. And so this device of collaring the profits of the clove trade and running the administration with their help. These profits, which would have been spread out over a large number of traders, were diverted, by the creation of a monopoly, to the administrative machine as well as to British imperialist concerns. Recently, a new burden has been undertaken by the Zanzibar Government for the honour and glory of British imperialism. The recurring cost of a naval coastal defence unit, or part of the cost, will fall on Zanzibar.

Thirdly, the political rule of the British over the colonies is perpetuated by this strategy of creating conflict on other issues and of diverting the attention of the Arab and African inhabitants from the fundamental anti-imperialist issue. Anti-Indian feelings are sought to be raised and the real imperialist exploiter hides behind this screen and carries on merrily with his work of exploitation.

This clove monopoly, it is obvious, has little to do with the interests of the African and Arab growers of clove. The monopoly is bound to hurt them in the long run. A monopoly by an independent national state might have some virtue in it; monopoly by a socialist state would inevitably benefit the growers as they would be the owners and beneficiaries of the monopoly. But a monopoly by an imperialist government in a subject colonial country can only benefit that government and the imperialism it represents.

The issue is thus quite clear for all who wish to understand it. The Zanzibar Indians are the victims of British imperialist policy, and their cause is the cause of all of us in India. For us it is a national question of grave import and no communal considerations affect it. Yet it is interesting to remember that the Indian merchants in Zanzibar, who are suffering from this new legislation and are fighting against it, are Muslims. Some of the Muslim members of the Central Assembly, who have constituted themselves as the guardians of Muslim interests and who voted recently with the government and against the interests of Zanzibar Indian Muslims, might well ponder over this fact.

The problem has a larger significance for it affects all Indians overseas as well as the national status of India. India cannot tolerate the humiliation and injury of her children abroad, and when they call us for succour, can we remain silent? Wherever they live or carry on business they are subjected to ignominy and discrimination, and constant conflicts arise. Today we cannot give them adequate and direct aid, but the

time will come when the long arm of India will reach them and will be strong enough to protect them. But even today we are not so weak as to watch helplessly the ruin of our countrymen.

The result of this brave resistance of Zanzibar Indians will have far-reaching consequences. If they win, they will increase the status of Indians abroad and all our countrymen overseas will be stronger to face the difficulties that encompass them. If they lose, it is not they only that lose, but India loses, and all her children abroad, wherever they might be, will sink in their helplessness. Zanzibar Indians occupy a strategic position among overseas Indians in the British colonies. They are a strong community which has played and is playing a decisive role in the economic life of the country. It is not easy to ignore them or suppress them, and if we help them they can win.

What can we do to help them? We had asked for an official embargo on cloves but the British Government, unhappily supported by some of our own countrymen, has refused to have this. Let us then have an unofficial embargo and boycott cloves and stop their import into India. This is a big enough weapon to paralyse the clove business of Zanzibar, for India is the biggest purchaser and consumer of cloves. Already, this has had a marked effect in Zanzibar where the price of cloves has fallen greatly and the government there is gravely embarrassed. We must organise efficiently this unofficial embargo and show to our alien government that the people of India can act effectively despite its opposition.

The Working Committee of the Congress has given the lead and I appeal to my countrymen to follow it. I appeal to the merchants not to import or deal in cloves. I appeal to all consumers to give up the use of cloves till this struggle ends satisfactorily for us. It is a small sacrifice but the cause for which we work is a big one. And let us remember that meanwhile our countrymen in Zanzibar are bravely carrying on their campaign of passive resistance.

14. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
August 30, 1937

My dear Krishna,

I had just written two long letters to you this evening when your cablegram arrived asking for airmail instructions for the Geneva meeting of

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

the thirteenth September in regard to China, Abyssinia, and the Indian national peace organisation.

About Abyssinia I do not know what the present position is. In any event we should adhere to our old policy of refusing to recognise the Italian conquest. No peace policy can be based on the acceptance of aggression simply because it has succeeded.

The Indian national peace organisation refuses to materialise. I see no prospect of it in the near future. The various organisations to which you once referred in a letter do not function at all and it is futile to expect anything from them. The Congress functions but it is overburdened with work. For the Congress to start a peace platform with others simply means that the whole burden falls on the Congress, and yet others interfere and make work difficult. It is fairly easy to cooperate in a demonstration, but it is far more difficult to do so organisationally. The Congress is so vastly more important than the others.

I am glad you have reminded me about China. Our attitude is one of complete opposition to Japanese aggression and of sympathy for China. Recently Indian troops were sent, or are being sent, to Shanghai. It was stated that this was to protect Indian interests there—an absurd and patently false pretext—unless by Indian is meant British. Unfortunately Bhulabhai Desai and Satyamurti issued a very foolish statement in regard to this. Soon after I issued a statement[2] about it, a copy of which I enclose. I think you should record your strong protest on behalf of the Congress at this exploitation of Indian manpower and resources in the interests of British imperialism. The real danger is that this might be repeated on a larger scale later, and might even result in India being dragged into some war. We must lay the greatest stress on this aspect of the question and make it perfectly clear that we shall resist it. In the interests of world peace, this kind of thing must not be allowed to occur.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

2. See pp. 611-612.

15. To Hooseinbhoy A. Laljee[1]

Allahabad
August 31, 1937

Dear Mr. Hooseinbhoy,[2]
Thank you for sending me the resolutions passed at a meeting in Bombay on the subject of Palestine.[3] I entirely agree that the British Government's proposals to divide up Palestine are objectionable and cannot solve the problem. I look upon this question from the political point of view and not from the religious. For me the Palestine movement is essentially an Arab movement of national freedom and I sympathise with it completely. You know also that the National Congress has repeatedly expressed its solidarity with the Arabs in this matter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(2)/1937, p. 255, N.M.M.L.
2. (1890-1971); a prominent nationalist Muslim and founder-member, Swaraj Party; member, Bombay Legislative Council, 1924-34, and Central Assembly, 1934-45; president, All India Shia Conference, 1937 and 1964-65.
3. The Muslims of Bombay, at a meeting on 10 August 1937, passed resolutions condemning the British proposal for the partition of Palestine and expressing solidarity with the Muslim Arabs of Palestine.

16. The Congress and World Problems[1]

Allahabad
September 4, 1937

Dear Comrade,
We have to face many intricate and difficult domestic problems, but because of these we may not ignore world problems which affect us directly and indirectly. The status and position that our national organisation has obtained in this country as well as abroad necessitate that we should take this larger view and fashion our own policy accordingly. The wishes and opinions of the Indian people already count for something in world affairs and the day is soon coming, we hope, when they

1. Circular to P.C.Cs. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.

will count for a great deal more. It is also a well recognised fact that international affairs are closely knit together and even a national problem, in order to be fully understood, has to be considered in its relation to world problems. The danger of international war and crisis is ever before us, and therefore it is necessary that we should educate public opinion in regard to affairs abroad and direct it to right channels.

I am therefore drawing your attention to some of these urgent problems, so that you might take necessary steps by asking Congress committees to organise meetings and demonstrations in regard to them.

Zanzibar and boycott of cloves—We have already addressed you on this subject. The future of all Indians living or trading abroad depends on the success of the passive resistance movement that is being carried on by Indian merchants in Zanzibar. The Working Committee has called for a boycott of cloves and this boycott must be pushed by all Congressmen.

Palestine—The struggle for freedom in Palestine has been going on for many years and it has taken many shapes. British imperialism is now attempting to cut up this little country into three parts so as to perpetuate its dominance there and safeguard its air route to India. The Congress has given its full support to this struggle for independence and we must condemn this fresh attempt at weakening the national movement in Palestine by splitting it up. It is our belief that the right way to solve the problem is on the basis of an undivided and independent Palestine. The approach to this is for the Arab leaders and the Jewish leaders to confer together without any interference from British imperialist authorities.

Abyssinia—The tragedy of Abyssinia is too recent to be forgotten. For that tragedy the partial responsibility must rest with the British Government which adopted throughout a weak and vacillating policy and indirectly encouraged Italian aggression. Lately the British Government has been endeavouring to get Abyssinia out of the League of Nations. We are not enamoured of the League and we do not expect anything from a body which has shown itself to be weak and powerless and incapable of doing anything effective. But the driving out of Abyssinia from the League will be a betrayal of a brave people in the hour of their defeat and humiliation; it will be a recognition of the right of an aggressor nation to dictate its will to the League which it had flouted and insulted. So far as India is concerned, we must oppose this and stand by the unhappy people of Ethiopia.

On the last occasion when Britain sought to get Abyssinia out of the League, this was opposed by Mr. Jordan, the representative of New Zealand. All progressive forces were mobilised to support New Zealand

and they succeeded, for the time being, in preventing this from happening. But Britain is likely to make the attempt again and it is quite possible that the so-called Indian representative,[2] nominated by the Government of India, may be ordered to support Britain. We must make it clear that the people of India are entirely opposed to this suppression of the Abyssinian people or to any recognition of the aggressor nation.

Indian troops sent to China—The sending of Indian troops to Shanghai without any previous consultation or consent of the Indian people, or their representatives, is not only an affront to India but is a matter of the most vital concern to us. The first question is: is Indian manhood and are Indian resources to be exploited for the protection of British imperialist interests? But the implications of this are vaster and more dangerous, and the second and more vital question arises: is India to be pushed into a war for the sake of British imperial interests? That is a question on which the Congress has spoken with emphasis and clarity on many occasions. Our position is clear as the day. We will not permit this exploitation of our people and we will be no parties to an imperialist war. Therefore it is clear that we must protest against this despatch of Indian troops to Shanghai.

China and Japan—In the war that is going on in the Far East our sympathies must inevitably be with the people of China and against the aggression of Japan. We must give full expression to this sympathy. At the same time we must make it perfectly clear that if the situation develops towards world war, we will be no parties to it.

It is desirable that we should draw the attention of the public again to the Congress resolutions on war danger. Public opinion must keep wide-awake and vigilant on this issue so that it may be prepared in some measure to face the dangers and crises that might suddenly descend upon us. Wars come today undeclared and unheralded and if we forget this fact we do so at our peril.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. The Aga Khan was elected president of the League of Nations in 1937.

17. To Mufti Amin Husseini[1]

Thanks for your cable.[2] The Indian National Congress sends you greetings and assurance of full solidarity in the struggle for Palestine independence. We trust that undivided Palestine will secure complete freedom from British imperialist control, enabling all communities there to cooperate together for their common good and for the progress of the country. To this end, we hope that the Arab leaders and Jewish leaders will confer to solve their problems without interference from British imperialism.

1. Cable sent from Allahabad, 4 September 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle,* 5 September 1937.
   Mufti Amin Husseini (1893-1974); Mufti of Jerusalem for forty years, organised Palestinian Arab opposition to the British mandate in Palestine and against Zionism.
2. It read: "The Palestine Arabs read with admiration your pronouncement regarding Palestine...and request your continued support."

18. Formation of Clove Boycott Committees[1]

It is time to take effective steps to bring about the boycott of cloves in India to help our countrymen in Zanzibar. For this purpose, I have appointed today a committee in consultation with the leading merchants of Bombay and other colleagues. This committee is a strong committee, strong from the Congress point of view and strong in its inclusion of leading merchants dealing in the trade of cloves. The strength of this committee is a measure of the earnestness with which we are going to deal with this problem. This committee is meant for all India, but to make it effective and workable it consists of Bombay men only so far. I hope it will co-opt leading merchants of Calcutta, Madras and elsewhere. I hope also the clove boycott committees consisting of businessmen and others will be formed in Calcutta and Madras by provincial Congress committees in cooperation with the local merchants and in consultation with the central committee. We must carry on this boycott throughout and there are going to be no half-hearted measures in this respect.

1. Statement to the press, Bombay, 12 September 1937. *The Hindustan Times,* 13 September 1937.

I congratulate the merchants on their patriotic attitude and decision.

I send greetings to our countrymen in Zanzibar and assure them again of our fullest support. Indians in Zanzibar have called for help, we have heard that call and they will hear our answer which will be an answer of action.

19. Observance of China Day, 1937[1]

The war in China goes on undeclared in the approved modern way, but nevertheless is ruthless and accompanied by the slaughter of thousands of human beings. Japanese aggression continues and the League of Nations, originally founded to protect the rights of the peoples and to prevent aggression, has become so helpless and impotent that it dare not even discuss the urgent problems of the day, much less take a decision on them.

Meanwhile, fascism grows and tears up every international treaty and obligation. Britain, one of the principal League powers, does not even protest and gives its indirect support to fascism. India, though not in a position to take any effective action, cannot remain a silent spectator of this tragedy, which might affect it considerably. We must organise our protest and keep a vigilant eye on what is happening.

I suggest that Sunday, September 26, should be observed as a special day for this purpose, when we should condemn the Japanese aggression on China and send our full sympathy to the Chinese people.

We must also record our organised protest on the sending of Indian troops to China without the assent of the Indian people and, in doing so, we should keep the larger danger of the international war before us. The 'war danger' resolution of the Faizpur Congress should therefore be repeated and explained.

I trust that Congress committees will organise meetings all over the country for this day and pass these resolutions.

1. Statement to the press, Broach, 14 September 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 15 September 1937.

20. Boycott of Japanese Goods[1]

Horror upon horror piles up in China and Japanese imperialism tries to crush the spirit of the Chinese people by the massacre of non-combatant men and women and even children.

Flourishing cities are destroyed from the air and terror reigns in that great land. We see something of what modern war is and we realise again the ruthlessness and inhumanity of imperialism.

All over India mass demonstrations and great meetings have condemned this, and we have sent our deep sympathy to our brothers and sisters in China. They are fighting most gallantly for their freedom and whatever suffering they may have to endure they will win through in the end. How can we help them? Boycott of Japanese goods has been suggested, not only in India but also in other parts of the world.

This suggestion is natural and justifiable and we give it full consideration. Organisation of such a boycott in India is not easy as Japanese goods are already controlled by a quota system and although a large variety of them come in, quantities are limited.

But it is clear that we must create the psychological atmosphere for such a boycott and each one of us, who feels hurt at the suffering and the sorrow of China under Japanese aggression, must avoid purchasing Japanese goods. But this must not be done in favour of other foreign goods. Mere sympathy is not enough. Let us do this much more at least to help the people of China in the hour of their trial and distress.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 30 September 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 1 October 1937.

21. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
September 30, 1937

My dear Krishna,
I seem to have a sheaf of letters from you which I have so far not acknowledged. One is dated the 8th September, another the 17th and two are dated the 18th September. Also the picture of the ambulance. I note what you say about your interview with Jordan.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

I have read your private report about the meeting of the Council of the International Peace Campaign at Geneva.

About China, there can be no difference of opinion in India. But, as I have pointed out elsewhere, a boycott of Japanese goods here is a complicated affair. As you will notice I have suggested something of the kind. Probably we shall pass a resolution to that effect in the coming A.I.C.C. meeting.[2] But I do not quite see what we can do except general propaganda. I have not yet seen the resolutions passed by the International Peace Campaign. India's attitude, more particularly the Congress attitude, is being appreciated by the Chinese abroad and I have received cables to that effect.

I am interested to learn about the proposed agrarian conference in February next.[3] I should like you to take part in this conference on our behalf.

We are prepared to send our affiliation fee to Dolivet at any time.

I have not written to you about the Palestine issue. As you know this matter is agitating India quite a lot and all Indian sympathy is with the Arabs. So far as the Muslims are concerned there is an attempt to make it a religious issue. I wonder if you can lay stress on this in the I.P.C. or elsewhere. Our position is that Palestine must be essentially an Arab country and independent. Further that the Arabs and Jews should meet together and compose their differences on the basis of Palestine independence. The legitimate rights of Jews should be safeguarded by mutual agreement and not by the imperialist power. I think that both the Jews and the Arabs are beginning to realise that there is no solution to the problem except one of mutual agreement between them. But there is still too much of a reliance placed by the Jews on British power enforcing its will against the Arabs. I read the full text of Weizmann's[4] address at Zurich. It was a very feeling one but there was little of approach to the Arabs. To some extent we have been in touch with both the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine. In England apparently the Arabs' cause is hardly represented and all sympathy is with

2. At a meeting in Calcutta in October 1937, the A.I.C.C. passed a resolution calling upon the Indian people to boycott Japanese goods as a mark of sympathy with the people of China.

3. The International Peace Campaign had decided to call an agrarian conference in Geneva in February 1938 to discuss problems affecting peasants and agricultural workers. This was to counter the effect of the conference to be convened in February 1938 by the International Labour Organisation to be attended mainly by representatives of landowners and governments.

4. Chaim Weizmann, president of the Zionist organisation and later President of Israel, stated the Jewish case at the twentieth Zionist Congress at Zurich in August 1937.

the Jews. While I sympathise with the Jews I do not see why this should blind us to the fact that we are dealing with an essentially Arab country and Arab interests should dominate.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

22. To V.K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
October 7, 1937

My dear Krishna,
I have your three letters, two dated the 25th September and one 29th. I have nothing to add to what I have written to you about the boycott of Japanese goods. The vague indication that I made to this effect has had a good response and I have even had messages of thanks from China. But I am not yet clear how to organise this and at the same time not to push forward the sale of British goods in India.

I have already sent you a message for the civil liberties conference.[2] I enclose another copy of this.

I had not read Masani's pamphlet but your exceeding annoyance at it made me look into it. Parts of it seem rather exaggerated but the feeling behind that speech of Masani is pretty common in India.[3]

I am leaving Allahabad for a considerable time, going to the Punjab and the Frontier.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See pp. 261-264.
3. In a speech delivered on 2 September 1937 in Bombay and later printed as a pamphlet entitled *A Foreign Policy for India*, Masani argued that until India became independent she could not materially influence developments in the international sphere. He pleaded for India's resistance to war, national self-reliance and withdrawal from the League of Nations. He also said that capitalism and not fascism was the cause of war, and that the struggle was not between fascism and democracy but between capitalism and socialism.

23. On the World Situation[1]

The peace of the world is menaced and preparations for war are going on in Europe and other countries at a feverish pace.

Factories manufacturing war materials have been working day and night for the last two years and men engaged in the production of war materials enjoyed not even Christmas.

Although such is the pace at which production of war materials is going on, no country in the world wants war. Nations tremble at the devastating nature of the next war. But war is inevitable. It will come. In fact, it is already on us.

Japan is waging an undeclared war on the Chinese, and the civilian population, including women and children, is being bombed. War has been going on for a considerable time now in Spain, and trouble has started in Palestine also, where martial law has been imposed and so many institutions have been declared unlawful. Newspapers have been banned. British imperialism is trying to crush the brave Arabs.

Disaster will follow the next war and there would be utter ruin on all sides. We are already reading about horrible happenings in places where war is being waged.

The events happening in other parts of the world will have their effect on India and the British Empire. I cannot say how the British Empire would fare in the next war, whether it would survive it or not. Nobody can foresee that but I can say this much, that within the next ten or fifteen years the British Empire will be profoundly affected and it is possible that it might break up.

I would not be sorry if that happens for the British Empire has been the cause of much unhappiness to the subject nations.

There would be only two forces working in the next war, namely, the one which struggled for the freedom of their respective countries and the other trying to keep the nations in slavery.

The events taking place in Spain profoundly move us. We cannot send our men to fight for the Spanish Government but we could send an ambulance corps.

We should follow world events keenly and must be ready for war when it comes. We must be in a position to defend ourselves and for this the primary need is organisation. The Congress is the only organisation in the country which can fight British imperialism.

1. Speech at Delhi, 10 October 1937. From *The Hindustan Times*, 11 October 1937.

We cannot afford to fight over petty matters and communal questions when weightier issues are before us seeking solution. There are many dangers before us and we should therefore forget our small quarrels and concentrate on the achievement of freedom for the country. For who lives if India dies?

India's condition seems perplexing to me at times. I am a professional politician. As President of the Congress, I have tremendous responsibilities on my shoulders. I cannot run away from them. I must therefore shoulder them. At times they are very tiring. I have shouldered these responsibilities for a long time now and I have never shirked them. The fate of many millions of people is entrusted to the Congress. Faced with certain difficult situations, it is not easy for anyone to say which course one should follow and which one should not.

I have to feel the pulse of the country and see whether the country is going backward or forward. I have to see that the forward step is maintained. I can see that we are on the threshold of freedom for our motherland. But we cannot shut our eyes to the many difficulties besetting our path.

The mere shouting of *Inquilab Zindabad* will not bring us freedom. India cannot achieve freedom through these slogans. We should consider seriously the questions facing the country and the world. I cannot say how far Indians have understood these problems and their implications. The achievement of freedom is not an end in itself. There are questions like unemployment, poverty, etc., which we shall have to face courageously and find solutions for them. However, these questions are not easy of solution. We have to create mass consciousness among the people for their rights and duties and a feeling of self-confidence. If there is no awakening among the masses, the attainment of freedom would not mean anything. We have therefore to realize our own strength. If we do that there is no nation on earth which can keep us down.

The civil disobedience movement symbolised our strength. But we must remember that a handful of leaders cannot do much till they have the strength of the masses behind them. If we forget this, we shall find ourselves in a sorry state.

The fact that Congress governments have been established in seven provinces does not mean that we have achieved Swaraj. The Congress has accepted office after nearly two years of discussion. We have accepted office not on any petty consideration but with a view to make ourselves strong. If we have the power we would help the peasants and labourers and improve their conditions. But it is a fact that we do not have much power to help them.

We cannot help the peasants because the country is, so to say, mortgaged to the I.C.S. We are, therefore, not in a position to bring about the necessary reforms in the country. It is for that reason that we hesitated at first to accept office. Conditions, however, have remained practically the same. The poor peasants feel that there has been no change. They can only breathe a little more freely under the Congress ministries. That is all. They can now go to the ministers and complain if police and other officials misbehave. From this they should not however conclude that we have got all power. Our fight is not yet over. We have therefore to make ourselves strong.

The U.P. ministry has decided to release all political prisoners. While on the one hand, the Congress ministries are releasing prisoners, on the other hand, more arrests are being made on political grounds in the Punjab and in Bengal.

There can be no compromise on the question of federation. If federation is introduced it would block our path towards freedom. We would be tied down along with the states and it would hamper our progress towards our goal. I am also averse to the very system of monarchy which has caused only misery to the people.

24. The Need for a Broader Outlook[1]

I am speaking to impress upon you the need for taking a rational view of men and events. I think the British Government is not contriving to precipitate war. On the other hand, it wants to avoid it. It is the fear of war and the armament activities of other nations that prompt it to intensify its own war preparations. In fact, Britain, France and America have too much of possessions and riches of the world to risk war.

War in fact never ceased during the last eighteen years. Even after the Great War, both economic and actual wars have been going on the world over. Even after the war ceased, foodstuffs to Germany were not allowed and children were starved to death for some time.

I was in London in 1935 on Armistice Day, when eighty lakhs of people suspended all business for two seconds which was very impressive. All over Europe, people were deeply touched by the solemn occasion.

1. Speech at Allahabad, 11 November 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 12 November 1937.

They all hate war. It is wrong to suppose that either the British or the Germans are cruel people. It is not proper for us to generalise in that manner. Our fight is not against individuals. We stand for definite principles.

I want to utter a note of warning that we should not take a narrow view of things. If we want to achieve great things, we must have great minds and big hearts.

In the event of war it becomes incumbent on us to think rationally and also make our organization strong. We do not want that the blood of Indians should be shed in an imperialistic war while they remain as slaves. After having made sacrifices in the past, we should see that we utilise the international situation to our own advantage and enlarge the bounds of our freedom. We are not going to be mere tools to be used in the imperialistic game.

I would plead that base actions and mean thoughts are not allowed to tarnish our ideals. Some people complain that the British are trying to divide the Hindus and Muslims, but the fault, in a large measure, is of the Indian people who are foolish enough to allow themselves to be exploited in this way. The only method by which we can strengthen ourselves is to maintain high ideals by rising above the petty considerations of communal gains and selfish interests.

25. Indian Sympathy for China[1]

You must have read of the decision of the All India Congress Committee regarding a boycott of Japanese goods. It is difficult to organize this as the Japanese goods dribble in under a quota system and are very cheap. Nevertheless we are trying to create a psychology of boycotting these goods. As you know, there is a strong anti-Japanese and pro-China feeling in the country. The recent events in China have shocked the people of India and all our sympathies are with the people of China.

1. Jawaharlal sent this message to Professor Tan Yun-Shan, founder-director, Cheena Bhavan, Visvabharati. *The Hindustan Times*, 28 November 1937.

26. Appeal to Help China[1]

I have received the following cable from Dr. John Dewey,[2] Prof. Albert Einstein, Mr. Bertrand Russell and Romain Rolland from New York:

> In view of the wanton destruction of oriental civilization, and for humanity, peace and democracy we propose that the people of all countries should organize a voluntary boycott against Japanese goods, refuse to sell and load war materials to Japan and cease cooperation with Japan in ways that help her aggressive policy while giving China every possible help for relief and self-defence until Japan has evacuated all her forces from China and abandoned her policy of conquest. Wish the Congress to endorse this statement and give publicity and call all India to join action.

The following reply has been sent by me to Dr. John Dewey:

> Your cable. Congress already expressed condemnation of Japanese aggression and full sympathy for China. Called for boycott of Japanese goods and agrees to general policy and objective of your statement and is giving publicity. Congress is most willing to cooperate for humanity, peace and democracy everywhere and for elimination of fascism and imperialism.

In issuing this message to the press I should like to draw the attention of the public again to the urgent necessity of abstaining from purchasing Japanese goods. Horror piles upon horror in China and armed might and air bombs and poison gas kill hundreds of thousands of her children and crush her very soul. We are sickened at the brutality and inhumanity of the Chinese scene. But mere sympathy is not enough. We must give such help as we can. This help can be of two kinds—refusal to purchase Japanese goods and financial assistance for medical relief. I trust that Congress committees and other organisations will carry on propaganda for this boycott. Donations for sending medical relief will be received in the All India Congress office and will be forwarded to proper quarters. An urgent demand for medical supplies has been received by us and I earnestly trust that the people of India will give what they can for relief of suffering and tortured humanity in China.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 18 December 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 20 December 1937.
2. (1859-1952); American philosopher, educationist and critic; also founder of the American Civil Liberties Union, 1920.

27. Observance of China Day, 1938[1]

I have recently drawn the attention of the Indian people to the horrors attendant on the Japanese invasion of China and appealed to them to help our Chinese comrades by subscribing for medical supplies. I have today received an appeal for help from Chu Teh,[2] commander-in-chief, eighth route army, China. Chu Teh, it will be remembered, was the chief of the famous army which performed the prodigious feat some years ago of marching 8,000 miles in spite of almost insuperable difficulties. The feat is unique in military annals.

I suggest that Sunday, January 9, be observed as China Day throughout India and that meetings be held and collections made for the purpose of helping the Chinese with medical supplies. All such contributions and collections should be sent to the Foreign Department, All India Congress Committee, Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 24 December 1937. *The Hindu*, 25 December 1937.
2. (b. 1886); leading commander of the Chinese communist armies before 1949; vice-chairman, central people's government, 1949-54; vice-chairman of the republic of China, 1954-59; chairman of the National People's Congress Committee, 1959-69.

28. The Congress and China Day[1]

Allahabad
December 25th, 1937

Dear Comrade,

I should like to draw your particular attention to a statement I have issued to the press suggesting that Sunday, January 9th, 1938, be observed as China Day throughout India. On this day public meetings should be held in towns and the large villages to express sympathy for the people of China in their hour of trial and to explain the significance of the struggle that is going on in the Far East. The public should be requested not to buy Japanese goods but this does not mean that they should

1. Circular to P.C.Cs. A.I.C.C. File No. P-1/1937-38, p. 9, N.M.M.L.

buy other foreign goods. In particular, Japanese silk should not be purchased. On that day collections should be made for the purpose of sending medical supplies to China.

Please inform all your local committees of this and request them to take steps immediately to organise this work.

All money collected for the Chinese people should be sent to the Foreign Department of the A.I.C.C., Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

29. To Rabindranath Tagore[1]

Allahabad
January 9, 1938

My dear Gurudeva,
Your telegram announcing your generous donation for the China Relief Fund came last night. It gave me great pleasure. Apart from the sum itself, the lead you have been, and are giving, in regard to China has been of inestimable value to us. Perhaps you know that even our feeble gestures of goodwill and help have produced a deep impression on the Chinese people. Unfortunately our politicians, or most of them, are so engrossed in their domestic problems that they pay little attention to world events, even though these may have an important bearing on India.

Affectionate regards,

Yours,
Jawaharlal

1. Visvabharati Papers, Santiniketan.

30. The Need for Help to China[1]

A sort of world conflict is going on in which democracy is pitched against imperialism and fascism. What is happening in China? Japan

1. Speech on China Day, Allahabad, 9 January 1938. *The Leader*, 13 January 1938.

is trying to secure domination and political influence over China which would mean the strangling of the Chinese aspirations for freedom. If we understand that imperialism stands against the political emancipation of nations and if we also understand that the victory of imperialism at one place is bound to have its influence over other places, we would surely extend our sympathies to the people of China. The Chinese are fighting an imperialist power which is almost fascist in character. Japan first attacked China a few years back. Loud protests were made but they had no effect. Now seeing China becoming more powerful and organized every day, Japan fears that her imperialist ambitions may receive a setback. It has therefore suddenly attacked China. Formerly there used to be a regular declaration of war, but now hostilities commence even without such a declaration. In these hostilities bombers are used and thousands of people are killed and immense loss to property is caused. Our fellow human beings are being oppressed in China and, in the name of humanity, it is our duty to help these innocent people. But what help can we give? Even if we send a few men from here, that is not enough. We can show our sympathies by sending medical supplies and such other help at this hour of their national struggle. What, however, would have a telling effect on Japan is the boycott of Japanese goods. I do not mean any harm to Indian merchants who have commercial dealings with Japan, but they should not place any further orders with Japan. In any case, I would like the public to boycott Japanese goods. I also suggest that the names of the shopkeepers, who have signed the pledge that they will not sell Japanese goods, should be brought to the notice of the people so that they may patronize their shops.

I have received numerous letters from the Chinese leaders and generals expressing gratitude for India's sympathy and seeking assistance in the hour of their crisis.

The vital issues confronting the world cannot be settled in one day and soon enough we will have to decide on which side we would range ourselves. We have to be prepared for the future struggle which is inevitable for winning the country's freedom. The international situation is at present very complicated and any day there may start a general conflagration. Most of the European countries have been making vast preparations for some time past and Britain too is not lagging behind. It is for this reason that the Congress for the last two years has been saying that India will not join Britain in any future war which would be in furtherance of its imperialist designs and I want to make it perfectly clear that Indians do not want to be a party to any war. If a war is forced upon us against our will then Britain would have to

fight with India first before it fights with anyone else. Therefore we have been trying to organise the masses and strengthen our national forces.

Whether we could send some doctors to help the Chinese is a matter under consideration. In the meanwhile, we should try to help the Chinese in other ways.

31. To James S. Cushman[1]

Allahabad
February 2, 1938

Dear Mr. Cushman,[2]
Miss Agatha Harrison has forwarded to me the cutting about the Trotsky trial[3] which you sent her. Thank you for thinking of me in this connection. I have read Walter Lippmann's[4] article with interest. I do not often agree with Walter Lippmann and I do not agree with him in the present instance. But I certainly think that the events in Russia during the past year and more, and specially the trials of many persons who had been prominent in the revolution, have been very distressing features. They made one feel that there must be something wrong about a system which has to indulge in such cruelty and suppression. It seems that violence must necessarily breed violence. And yet I do think the socialist ideal and collectivism are right and ultimately inevitable. The way to them might be somewhat different.

The New Year is well on but still may I send you and Mrs. Cushman my good wishes for it?

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. An American who visited India in January 1937 and met Jawaharlal in Allahabad.
3. In 1936 and 1937 several leading communists were tried in Moscow on charges of assisting Trotsky against Stalin and for plotting against the state. They were later executed.
4. (1889-1974); leading American newspaper columnist and political writer.

32. To J. Olsvangar[1]

Allahabad
February 2, 1938

Dear Dr. Olsvangar,
I am grateful to you for your message of sympathy[2] of the 12th January 1938.

I do not remember if I thanked you for sending me a copy of *The Round Table* containing an article on Palestine.[3] I read this article with interest and I have been trying to follow developments in Palestine with some care. I must confess that I am distressed at what is happening there and I see no way out of this tangle by the method that the British Government is pursuing. I wish the Jews did not rely so much on the British Government and would seek a settlement directly with the Arabs. That would be both honourable and lasting. Any other attempt at a settlement will fail and will bring greater bitterness in its train.

Sincerely yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. On the death of Jawaharlal's mother on 10 January 1938.
3. An article entitled *Palestine And The Arab World* discussed the economic and military issues arising out of the plan for the partition of Palestine.

33. To Nnamdi Azikiwe[1]

Allahabad
February 11, 1938

Dear Mr. Nnamdi Azikiwe,[2]
I have received your book *Renascent Africa* which you have been good enough to send me. I am grateful to you for this gift and I am looking forward to reading this book with pleasure. I am greatly interested

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1904); vice-president, Nigerian National Democratic Party; member, Nigerian Legislative Council, 1947-51; minister, Government of Eastern Nigeria, 1955-57; Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Nigeria, 1960-63 and president, 1963-66.

in the future of Africa and I welcome signs of awakening among the Africans. May I assure them that they have the good wishes of the Indian people? We hope that in the near future the terrible burdens they have suffered from will be removed and they will be given an opportunity to grow in every way.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

34. To Tan Yun-Shan[1]

Allahabad
April 10, 1938

My dear Professor,[2]
I have received your letter of April 7th. As you are going back to China I hope that you will carry to the Chinese people the deep sympathy of India in their present trials. You will tell them how the people of India have followed with pain and anxiety the invasion of China by the Japanese army and how they have been shocked by the brutalities committed by the invaders. All over the world we see the most shameless gangsterism in international affairs. What the outcome of all this will be it is difficult to say. But I agree with you that ultimately the forces of good will triumph over the forces of evil. I have no doubt that China will meet with success in repelling this invasion. But in doing so I earnestly trust that she will not adopt the militarism of the West but will retain the noble qualities which made her so great in the past. China and India have stood for certain ideals in human life for ages past. These ideals must be adapted to the changing circumstances of the world today. But they must remain to guide us in the future as they have done in the past. I trust that it may be given to our two countries to cooperate together in the cause of world peace and freedom and that neither of us, in good fortune or ill fortune, will lose our souls in the pursuits of some temporary advantage.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1901); a Chinese scholar of oriental and western philosophies; taught Chinese language and culture at Visvabharati, 1928-31 and 1934; founder-director, Cheena Bhavan at Santiniketan, 1934-67.

Recent news from China has heartened us. But what has encouraged us most is the fine unity that the Chinese people are showing in the face of trial and disaster. It is that spirit that counts and that must win. We in India have much to learn from this example of unity and sacrifice for the cause of national freedom.

I hope that when you come back to Santiniketan I shall have the pleasure of meeting you again. I intend visiting Europe this summer.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

35. To Madam G. Duchene[1]

Allahabad
April 29, 1938

Dear Madam Duchene,[2]

Thank you for your letter of the 21st April informing me of the Women's International Conference that is being held at Marseilles on the 13th of May. I am afraid it is not possible, at this short notice, for any woman of India to participate in this conference but I am quite sure that Indian women will give you their fullest cooperation in the task that you have set for yourself. Recent events in Europe, more particularly in Spain[3] and Austria,[4] have shown us what a brutal and unscrupulous fascism can do. It is time that all men and women of goodwill, all over the world, who believe in peace and democratic progress should ally themselves to combat this grave menace.

Recently we have also seen that the British Government has agreed to recognise the conquest of Ethiopia by Italy.[5] This is the very negation of all morality in international relations. If governments weaken and err, it is up to the people to stand up for the right.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. F.D.-7/1936-38, p. 425, N.M.M.L.
2. An active member of the Women's International Conference held in Marseilles in May 1938.
3. The rebel troops under General Franco had succeeded, by 15 April 1938, in isolating Barcelona and Catalonia from the rest of the country.
4. Austria was annexed by Germany on 13 March 1938.
5. The Anglo-Italian Agreement of 16 April 1938 led to the recognition by Britain of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia.

I send my greetings to the International Women's Conference and wish it all success in the great task which it has undertaken.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

36. The Failure of the League of Nations[1]

The Working Committee at their last meeting appointed a committee on foreign affairs. A great country like India and an organisation like the Indian National Congress must necessarily at any time pay attention to international affairs and lay down their policy in regard to them. In the present state of ever-deepening world crisis, continuous vigilance is necessary on our part lest events should march ahead and catch us unawares and injure the cause we have at heart. In full recognition of this fact the Congress at Haripura passed its resolution on foreign policy[2] and the Working Committee appointed their foreign affairs committee.

Nearly twenty years ago the World War ended and in the minds and hearts of many people there was some hope that the tide of war had been stemmed and the foundations of a system of collective security laid. They looked to the new League of Nations to check the aggressor and protect the law-abiding among nations. Yet the history of these twenty years is one long record of failure and the League of Nations stands today weak and helpless, discredited and ignored. All the brave words about disarmament and the outlawry of war have ended in nothing, idle dreams that have vanished at the coming of cruel day. The world hovers today at the brink of war and catastrophe and spends three times

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 30 April 1938. *The Tribune*, 1 May 1938.
2. The resolution passed at the Haripura session stated: "The people of India desire to live in peace and friendship with their neighbours and with all other countries, and for this purpose wish to remove all causes of conflict between them. Striving for their own freedom and independence as a nation, they desire to respect the freedom of others, and to build up their strength on the basis of international cooperation and goodwill. Such cooperation must be founded on a world order and a free India will gladly associate itself with such an order, and stand for disarmament and collective security. But world cooperation is impossible of achievement so long as the roots of international conflict remain and one nation dominates over another and imperialism holds sway. In order therefore to establish world peace on an enduring basis, imperialism and the exploitation of one people by another must end...."

as much on armaments as it did in 1914. International morality, feeble as it always was, has ceased to exist. Manchuria, Ethiopia, Spain, Austria are the bloody witnesses of the new order of unabashed and brutal gangsterism which fascism is seeking to impose upon the world. The League is paralysed and can only think in terms of localising a conflict which spreads continually. The League powers, and notably Britain, ignore the League and its decisions and make pacts with the aggressors. Peace and security are thus non-existent and the strong are free to bully and violate the weak.

India, engrossed as she is in her own problems and struggle for freedom, can be no passive spectator of this tragedy which will powerfully affect her own future destiny. India must therefore make her voice heard among the nations and make it clear that when opportunity offers itself she will take action to support the cause she has at heart. She cannot be a party to the foreign policy of the British Government, which is increasingly becoming pro-fascist and is leading to war. India wants freedom and security and peace and believes in a system of collective security. But collective security cannot be based on imperialism. The two are incompatible as democracy and imperialism are incompatible. The failure of the League of Nations is largely due to the attempt to make it function as a guardian of the imperialist powers backing it. If imperialism goes then alone can the dream of peace and security take shape.

In any world solution of the problem of collective security the freedom of India thus becomes an essential factor. Without it there is no solution and the seeds of conflict remain. This fact must be realised by all who work for peace and security.

Britain has recently concluded a pact with Italy and has agreed to recognise the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. She will now try to induce the League of Nations to do likewise. The British Government may forget its solemn pledges and betray the League and the cause of peace, but India must make it abundantly clear that she will be no party to this shameful policy. She will not recognise the Italian Empire over Ethiopia and the League of Nations must be made aware of India's stand in this matter. India stands for freedom and peace and collective security and will take her place by those powers who support these principles and oppose the recognition of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. We have instructed our representative on the executive of the International Peace Campaign accordingly and in response to his requisition an emergency meeting of the executive of the International Peace Campaign is being held at Geneva on May 7th prior to the League council meeting.

37. India and World Politics[1]

It is always a fascinating game to try to lift the veil over the future. The future, and that too not a distant one but the near future, is going to change the map of the world considerably. Unfortunately, many people, caught in their humdrum life, do not care to think of the future at all. It would not be a peaceful future, but it is going to be a bloody one. I think that people of India do not wish to be passive spectators, but want to be actors also, trying to shape their destinies according to their will.

I do not know how you look at world events. Do you think that these events have taken place as if by magic or do you think that there are some underlying forces that shape events? Do you want to think of history in terms of the history of the 19th century or the 13th century or of some remote age?

Perhaps you would be inclined to draw a parallel from the past. There was power politics in the past. Politics was dominated by power. If you still view history from the point of view of power politics, you would be hopelessly mistaken. For the very concept of power has changed. It would be dangerous to measure the present with the yardstick of the past. The present age is a dynamic age, a revolutionary age, a changing age. Not in politics alone but socially, economically, and industrially, the world is changing rapidly. And we have to be on guard, lest we may think of tomorrow in terms of today. There has been right through history a lag of ideas. Ideas do not keep pace with events. For instance, I would mention the French Revolution. The underlying cause was presumably economic and the distress of the peasant. The conditions which preceded the French Revolution are to be found in some parts of this country. The conditions existing under the present zamindari system can be compared to those existing in France of the pre-revolutionary days. Liberty, equality and fraternity enthused the people in the French Revolution. Great men like Voltaire and Rousseau had given these ideas to the world, and for a hundred years these ideas spread all over Europe. In France itself, the old land system was put an end to after the revolution and was brought up to date.

Meanwhile, something strange was happening, and that was the industrial revolution which changed the structure of society. Even at the

1. Jawaharlal and Subhas Chandra Bose spoke on this subject at a meeting organised by the Indian Civil Liberties Union, Bombay, 18 May 1938. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 19 May 1938.

time of the Napoleonic wars, new problems had already arisen out of the industrial revolution. The ideas of the French Revolution did not solve the problems of the people.

On account of this lag of ideas, occasionally these outbursts or revolutions have occurred in the world. These upheavals are merely attempts on the part of the people to catch up with events. They are efforts to cover the gap and that would mean the breaking up of old vested interests. So, Europe marches step by step towards catastrophe and all that fine European civilisation is again threatened with extinction.

If you want to understand current events and their future course, you must get over the gap between ideas and events. I am not addressing these remarks to the Liberals who belong to the past generation. Nor do I refer to the communalists who belong to the medieval times. I address them to Congressmen. Many in the Congress are so engrossed in the national struggle that they do not think in terms of ideas or of the future. Nationalism makes people lop-sided. They concentrate too much on the immediate issues before them. They cannot think of social and economic problems which a progressive country would think of. That has been the fate of the Indians and that has been the fate of the Irish people. And yet nationalism is the inevitable step which they have to take before they pass on to the next phase. Even in the Congress, when people think in terms other than that of politics, at once the lag in ideas becomes apparent. It is said that one chief function of the Congress is that of achieving political freedom and that other steps would follow after that freedom has been won. That is true. But these steps do not and would not follow in such a methodical fashion one after another. There is bound to be overlapping. For example, there is medieval feudalism, and side by side there is the most modern type of industrial capitalism. The process of development cannot be confined to the sphere of politics alone. History has shown that political freedom has to precede all other forms of freedom, but at the same time, all these forms of freedom are inter-connected. Capitalism in this country is in its early stages and it is yet developing. But the fact remains that capitalism is a world phenomenon, that if it cracks in the United States or in England, it is going to thrive in this country.

So the Congress which is essentially a political body cannot help thinking in terms of social and economic questions. That is why the Congress governments are so intensely interested in solving the land problems facing the peasants.

What is happening around us is that the people of the world have chosen different sides of forces to stand by. India should also make up her mind which side she has to take.

If we understand the conflict of these forces such as fascism and nazism, we would at once understand the politics of the British Government. We shall see the enormous mediocrity of the British 'National' Government. The British cabinet seems to have lost the capacity for thinking clearly and correctly. Since the loss of America, no government in Great Britain has ever been more incompetent and more inefficient than the present 'National' Government.

In Great Britain, the class hatred has developed to such an extent that the ruling families are prepared to see the extinction of the empire rather than see the down-and-out come into their own. That is how the attitude of the British Government towards Franco can be explained. They do everything to help the rebels indirectly, knowing full well that success of the rebels would mean disaster to the empire.

We must therefore try to look at the underlying causes of world tension. Hence I want the people to think of the present in terms of the future that is yet to come.

38. On Framing India's Foreign Policy[1]

In a world full of war and preparations for war India stands significantly as a country which has deliberately based its policy on peace and nonviolence. How far it is possible to apply these methods in the international sphere today, it is difficult to say.

But it must be remembered that the nonviolence of the Indian struggle is not a weak, passive and ineffective pacifism. It is a dynamic thing with sanctions behind it and if the world is to progress in culture and civilisation, it will have to adopt peaceful methods of solving its problems. That day may yet be distant. But India will cooperate with all her heart to bring it nearer.

For a subject country like India, foreign affairs and foreign policy are considered by many to be outside the scope of practical politics. They are a game at which only free nations can play. There is some truth in this for a subject country is controlled and bound down by the dominating power even in regard to its internal policy, and much more so

1. Allahabad, 26 May 1938. Foreword to *Foreign Policies of the Indian National Congress and the British Labour Party*, a pamphlet written by Ram Manohar Lohia. Reprinted in *The Bombay Chronicle*, 13 June 1938.

regarding its foreign policy. India may be an original member of the League of Nations but all the world knows that this means an additional voice and a vote for the British Foreign Office. The people of India have no say in the matter and their so-called representatives are nominated by the British Government. And so, inevitably, the subject country concentrated on achieving national independence before it could think of playing an effective part in international affairs.

And yet this is a half-truth and we see its limitations even today. In spite of her political subjection to Britain, India is increasingly interesting herself and to some extent influencing foreign policy. Even today the voice of India counts for something in international affairs. Why is this so? Because it is recognised that India is on the threshold of freedom and a free India is going to make her weight felt in world affairs. Because also the background of international affairs has changed and is continually changing. Cabinets and governments still play a dominant role in shaping foreign policy, but the mass of the people and their wishes count for more and more and though they may not yet be able to give shape and content to this policy, they influence it and sometimes exercise an effective check over it. That influence of the people will grow till palace politics and the intrigues of cabinets give place to a real and open collaboration between the peoples of various countries, till a league of governments gives place to a league of peoples.

The people of India will cooperate fully in this task, and it is right therefore that even today they should range themselves with the forces that work to this end. But as a matter of fact it has never been easily possible to separate domestic policy from foreign policy; each acts and reacts on the other. Today that separation is a manifest impossibility. And the Congress, in spite of its preoccupation with the internal struggle for freedom, has been compelled by force of circumstances to think of outside affairs and express itself in regard to them. As early as 1921, it passed a resolution on the foreign policy of India assuring our neighbouring countries of our friendship for them. As the war danger developed, the Congress expressed itself clearly and declared that India would be no party to an imperialist war. We were interested in the fate of Ethiopia, we protested against Japanese aggression in China, we sided wholeheartedly with the Spanish Government in its heroic fight against foreign invasion and domestic rebellion.

We took deep interest in all this and more not only because of our sympathy for a people who were fighting for freedom but because the Indian people were understanding the true significance of events abroad and were developing a definite foreign policy in regard to them. They saw that India's future was to some extent bound up with what was

happening in Europe or the Far East. As our vision and understanding have grown, so has our interest in foreign affairs.

The Haripura Congress went a step further in defining our foreign policy but still we are on the threshold of this domain and it is right that Congressmen should give thought to this matter and help in developing a clear-cut and comprehensive policy. Events march rapidly nowadays and we must not lag behind them or be caught napping when the time for action comes.

I welcome this essay of my colleague, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, as a contribution to the further study of this subject. He does not necessarily commit the Congress to what he says, but his background is that of the Congress and many will agree with him. He has discussed at some length the changing policy of the British Labour Party. This policy has often been in the past hostile to India or at best indifferent. It has been weak and ineffective in the domestic field. It has given passive support sometimes to the reactionary 'National' Government of the day. And yet at their last conference there were gleams of hope and we must welcome them.[2] We welcome them because if that policy is really pursued it might offer a basis of cooperation. We have stood up against the British Government and resisted it but we want to make it clear that our resistance is to their policy and to their domination over India. We would welcome cooperation with the British people and with other peoples on the basis of Indian independence and world peace. That is the corner-stone of our policy and we cannot give it up.

There is a talk of collective and pooled security to ensure peace and freedom, while on the other hand the world rushes headlong to war and catastrophe. Those who talk of collective security will have to be clear in their minds about it. Is it going to be based on pacts of certain Western governments and on the continuation of the imperialist system? To imagine so is to ignore realities. There can be no collective security or peace on the basis of imperialism, just as there can be no peace if fascism holds sway. There can be no pooled security unless the problem of India and like problems are solved. India will throw her whole weight in any real scheme of collective security and peace. But if her own freedom is ignored she will consider the scheme a sham and a farce. The problem of India is thus an essential part of the world problem. Whatever happens she makes a difference and it is well that this should be realised.

Meanwhile it seems clear that collective security must be backed by

2. The Labour Party at its annual conference in October 1937 had urged a firm and honourable international policy.

some kind of effective sanctions against the aggressor. What must these sanctions be? Military sanctions may perhaps be necessary and inevitable on particular occasions but they involve war, and the remedy might be as bad as the disease. Economic sanctions may also involve that risk, but not necessarily so. They are powerful and on the whole peaceful; though their effect might not be immediate, it is far-reaching. It is quite possible to control the aggressor by economic sanctions alone. To have no sanctions is to allow free play to the aggressor and ultimately to bow to his will. That cannot be agreed to, for that means no collective security. It means the law of the jungle.

39. Despatch of Medical Unit to China[1]

Allahabad
June 1st, 1938

Dear Comrade,

On the eve of my departure for Europe, may I draw your attention to the medical unit that is being sent to China on behalf of the Congress? The President has already issued an appeal for funds for this. I am sure that this appeal will meet with an abundant response if Congress committees interest themselves in the work of collection. We must send a gift worthy of India and of the Congress. Already our decision to send a medical unit has been warmly welcomed in China and elsewhere. We must take speedy steps to give effect to our decision. I hope therefore that you will circularise your district and local committees to make collections in this behalf and to send them to the A.I.C.C. office.

It may be that under the President's direction we may have to celebrate special days in connection with our China mission. If so, it is desirable that on these occasions Congress committees should fly our national flag and the Chinese flag jointly. Congress committees should therefore procure Chinese flags. If there is any difficulty in obtaining them, the secretary of our China committee, Shri G.P. Hutheesing, Gulshan Villa, Oomar Park, Warden Road, Bombay, should be asked.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Circular to P.C.Cs. A.I.C.C. File No P-1/1938, pp. 67-68, N.M.M.L.

14

THE HARIPURA CONGRESS AND AFTER

1. Report to the A.I.C.C. at Haripura[1]

My colleague, the general secretary, is submitting to the A.I.C.C. the report of the Congress work during the year. It has not been the practice for the retiring President to add to this or to have a separate say, but nevertheless I am venturing on this course as I should like to place certain considerations before the Committee. Although I have called this note a report, the designation is not quite correct. I am not traversing the ground covered by the general secretary, nor do I propose to make a survey of the past year's activities. But I do wish to draw attention to certain important aspects of the problems we have to face.

These problems grow more complex and the burden of responsibility on the Congress ever increases. This is the inevitable consequence of the growth of the Congress itself and the ever-widening influence that this great organisation exercises on the hundreds of millions of our countrymen. History has cast on us, of the Congress, the task of moulding India's destiny, and the history of tomorrow will record how we have faced this great task. We have rendered a good account of ourselves in the past, and, with all our faults and weaknesses, served India with fortitude and with abundant love for her suffering children. But the future is harder to face. What will it say of us and of the Congress? We who meet here at Haripura, in a corner of peasant India, have to carry this heavy and crushing burden of the future, and what we say and do here will fashion to some extent the future that is to come.

What are we? Individuals linked together in a mighty organisation. Individuals play their role on the public stage and sometimes influence events; organizations give content to the lives of large numbers of people and mould their activities. But the individual and the organisation move in their narrow spheres, ineffectively, so long as they do not represent in some way the inner urge of the masses and the great forces that go into the making of history. It is because the Congress became the instrument of these great forces in India, because it came to represent the hunger for freedom of our people and their passionate desire to be rid of their poverty, that it played the great role of India's standard-bearer in the face of imperialist might.

We cannot shirk the responsibility that has been cast on us. That responsibility includes not only our domestic problems, vitally important

1. This was written by Jawaharlal on 10 February 1938 and submitted to the A.I.C.C. session at Haripura on 16 February 1938. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 17 February 1938.

as they are, but also our international problems. Engrossed as we are in our struggle for freedom, we have already begun to take part in international affairs, and that part is certain to grow. In any event we could not have ignored the growing shadow of war and the strange evolutions of power politics in the world. They affect us intimately, both directly and because of their effect on British imperialism. But as the day of our independence draws near, we have to be clear in our own minds about our foreign policy and the part we shall play in international affairs.

We have already made it abundantly clear that we shall be no parties to imperialist war, and if British imperialism seeks to drag us into it, we shall resist the attempt. Further we have repeatedly stated that imperialism itself, and the economic roots that underlie it, which result in the subjection of one nation by another and in international rivalry, is the dominating cause of war. Imperialism and peace are as the poles apart, and to have peace in this world we must rid it of imperialism.

We see today fascist aggression all over the world and frightfulness beyond description accompanying it, and an open glorification of war. We see also countries genuinely anti-imperialistic and desiring peace, as well as imperialist countries, sated with conquest and the spoils of conquest, fearful of war lest they lose what they have. There is talk of the fascist powers and the democratic countries, and we are asked if, in the conflict that seems to be inevitable, we are going to refrain from helping the democratic countries. We must clear this confusion in our own and in other people's minds.

We are entirely against fascism, and the Congress has given the strongest expression to its condemnation of fascist aggression in Africa, Europe and the Far East. But what are the democratic powers and what will they be fighting for when world war overwhelms us? England? England is certainly democratic to some extent, but only in the domestic sphere. It is anti-democratic and imperialistic in regard to its empire. So far as we in India are concerned, we have this imperialism as our constant companion. If England fights and wins, it is British imperialism that wins and the British hold on India is strengthened thereby. On no account therefore can we be parties to India helping in such a war—even against the fascist powers. If democracy is going to fight fascism, then democracy must live up to its name and be democratic at home and abroad.

Labour leaders and pacifists in England are indignant against fascism and are even prepared to shed their pacifism in defence of England. But they view with equanimity the continuance of British imperialism in India, and console themselves with the thought that if they left

IN PENANG, MALAYA, 23 MAY 1937

ADDRESSING A PUBLIC MEETING AT SEREMBAN, MALAYA 29 MAY 1937

India we would fall a prey to Japan or Germany or Italy. It is a curious and comforting delusion and shows how a dormant imperialism colours the outlook of even those who call themselves democrats, pacifists and socialists. The obvious contradiction in a policy based on democracy at home and imperialism abroad is not seen. But the contradiction persists none the less and inevitable consequences will flow from it. These consequences are that we will on no account assist British imperialism and that our primary objective is to get rid of that imperialism. Every socialist, as well as everyone else desiring world peace, must, if he understands the implications of his creed, support us in this attitude and strive to end imperialism in India and elsewhere.

To talk of a Japanese or German or Italian invasion of India is to forget realities completely and to live in a world of fantasy. Japan is further away from India, for all practical purposes, than England is. The land route is entirely closed and impossible of passage, even for aircraft. The sea-route is very long and terribly dangerous and cannot be negotiated till British sea power and air power have ceased to exist in the East, and probably America has been wholly disabled. Japan cannot think of coming to India till she has absorbed the whole of China, a task almost certainly beyond her competence and resources. Even after that, the next countries on the list are Australia, the Philippine Islands and the Netherlands India.

It is equally fantastic to think in terms of a German or Italian invasion of India. Both these countries will have their work cut out for them in Europe and their objectives lie in Europe or North Africa. But if, by any chance, the fascist powers gain an overwhelming victory in a world war and the world lies prostrate before them, then of course anything might happen. Even so India will not go as a gift to anybody. She will resist the invader to the utmost and, in spite of lack of military and such like resources, she has developed enough strength and technique of her own method of struggle to make an invasion a terribly burdensome operation. We have to struggle today with an entrenched system which has dug itself deep into our very soil. It will be far easier to deal with a newcomer who comes with hostile intentions.

Recently we have had the farce of air-raid precautions in some of our cities and gas-masks have been flourished before us. The idea of giving gas-masks instead of food or work to starving people may have some humour in it, or probably it is just the product of the average military mind, but in India today it is a manifest absurdity. There is no obvious risk of air raids in India except possibly some stray attempt. Are German or Italian or Japanese planes coming across thousands of miles over continents and oceans to bomb Indian cities? That would be difficult

enough under any circumstances, and it would be totally useless from the point of view of the larger objective that the enemy forces would have. It is clear that the air-raid precautions in India have only one end in view—to familiarise the Indian people with the idea of approaching war, to create an atmosphere favourable to our joining it. Many of our countrymen have not realised this and seem to welcome these fanciful activities of the military in India. It is time they understood their significance and opposed them for what they are—preparations of British imperialism to rush us into an imperialist war.

For the same reason we have opposed the despatch of Indian troops to China. India has sent her whole-hearted sympathy to the people of China in their travail and we would gladly help them to the best of our ability. But we will not tolerate the use of Indian troops for the purposes of British imperialism.

If we are opposed to any participation in an imperialist war, we must be equally opposed to any increase in armaments in India. The army in India is not a national army. It is an imperialist army and partly a foreign army of occupation. To increase its strength or effectiveness is to strengthen imperialism and we can be no parties to this. Indeed we cannot approve of any expenditure on it. Recently the mechanisation of the British army in India was debated in the Central Assembly. We are totally opposed to this not only on the ground that it is the British part of the army that is mechanised, or that we object to additional military expenditure, but on the more fundamental ground of resisting the strengthening of the apparatus of imperialism in India. We are told that this is required for the defence of India, but the defence of India, in the vocabulary of our rulers, means the defence of British imperialism and British vested interests in India.

The world seems to be in a perpetual state of crisis and no one knows when this might lead to catastrophe. We must therefore be perfectly clear in our own minds where we stand and what we propose to do, and we must let other people know our minds. In the conflict between fascism and democracy, we are all for democracy, but England does not come to us in a democratic garb and we will not cooperate with her imperialism. Even apart from India, British foreign policy, during the past eight years, has been singularly pro-fascist. Britain has actively supported or passively accepted fascist aggression in the Far East and in the West. In spite of brave words to the contrary, she has consistently helped the fascist powers to grow in stature and power and has weakened the League of N: tions. The key to the understanding of international affairs in recent years is this attitude of the British 'National' Government. Disarmament came to grief because of it. Germany

repudiated the Treaty of Versailles and entered into a naval treaty with Britain over the head of the League of Nations. The British Government is very largely responsible for the shameful farce of non-intervention in Spain, and recently this government has even sent an official representative to the rebels in Spain. France might have followed a different policy but fear of being isolated has made her a hanger-on of the British foreign policy. Thus the British Government must largely shoulder the responsibility for the failure of disarmament, the fading away of the League of Nations, and the deplorable deterioration in international relations. Imperialism must necessarily result in ever-increasing armaments.

The policy of the Congress is governed by two basic considerations—complete independence, our constitution being framed by a constituent assembly elected by the Indian people, and resistance to India's participation in Britain's wars. Both these are aspects of one and the same thing—anti-imperialism. On the constructive side of peace we are prepared to go to the fullest extent to outlaw war and establish world peace and collective security. Indeed we go further, as the very basis of our national struggle has shown, for we want to eliminate all violence from national or international affairs. As such we must stand for disarmament on the widest possible scale. Believing as we do in a world order, we shall cooperate with every attempt to evolve cooperation between nations.

The League of Nations was undoubtedly such an attempt, but the League was in effect a League of governments, and our government being a foreign government, we have so far had no place in the League. In the name of India the British Government has had an additional vote. We cannot agree to this misrepresentation and hence we have condemned the League and often demanded India's withdrawal from it. A free India would gladly cooperate with the League and would seek to make it a real League of peoples and not governments. Only when India is independent will she be properly represented in it.

Our ardent desire to work for world peace and to cooperate with other nations in this vital task is evidenced by the Congress joining the World Peace Congress. An essential part of the programme of the World Peace Congress is the strengthening of the League of Nations. We accept this, but subject to our present opposition to the League when we can find no place there. We must also make it clear that by accepting the League when we are free, we do not accept the *status quo* in international affairs or many of the grossly unfair treaties imposed by imperialistic countries on weaker nations. The League can only function effectively on a basis of equity and democracy and anti-imperialism.

Collective security would involve the use of some kind of sanctions against the aggressor nation. India would unhesitatingly join in sanctions, but it must be remembered that the whole Congress approach to this problem, as to others, will be governed by the policy of nonviolence. If we have adhered to nonviolence in our own struggle for freedom, equally so will we think in terms of it in considering international affairs and the coercion of an offending and aggressor nation. It may perhaps be open to doubt how far this policy will be applicable in defending a country against foreign aggression. Most of us, if we were in Spain or China today, would probably be compelled, by force of circumstances, to adopt the violent method of defence, rather than be ineffective spectators of tragedy and disaster. But in considering international sanctions the Congress is bound to oppose military sanctions for these would lead to war on a more extensive scale. Our policy would be economic sanctions which, if properly applied, are likely to be even more effective in the long run.

In world affairs today England is often referred to as a democratic nation, and yet the democracy underlying Britain's government can be judged by the new constitution in India with all its safeguards and special powers vested in the Governors and the Viceroy. Even more so by the proposed federation which seeks to bolster up the feudal states and through them British imperialism. India will resist this federation and the imperialism that lies behind it, and we shall continue our struggle for freedom whether war comes or crisis.

The Indian states still function in their old bad way and try to hold on to a century that is past. They endeavour to crush all attempts at political activity and yet all over India there is a stir and an awakening among the people of the states. The Congress objective in regard to the states is clear. The independence of India includes the states, and the people of the states must have the same freedom as those who live in other parts of India. Our movement for freedom includes in its scope all the states. While the objective is clear, there has been some doubt as to the way of approach to it by the Congress. Some have advocated a policy of non-interference by the Congress in the states, leaving it to the people of the states to shoulder the burden of their struggle. Inevitably that burden must fall on them, but it is neither possible nor desirable for the Congress to keep aloof. We can and should prevent the name of the Congress being exploited, but the Congress is vastly interested in every struggle for freedom in the states and, wherever possible, it has to give its support. The states are dark and unwholesome corners in India where strange things happen and people disappear leaving no trace behind. During the past year, one of the most advanced states in

India, Mysore, has gained an unenviable notoriety because of its attempt to crush an agitation aiming at responsible government in the state. The A.I.C.C. passed a resolution condemning the repression there. This resolution was criticised as *ultra vires* by Gandhiji, but I think it was entirely within the competence of the A.I.C.C.[2] If a state like Mysore behaves in this fashion, what shall we say of the other states?

We have now had six months' experience of the working of the Congress ministries and life has not been easier for us because of the new problems that have faced us. The ministries have functioned bravely in spite of enormous difficulties and have a substantial record to their credit. And yet we wish it was more. There are so many things that cry aloud to be done, so many abuses to go, so much leeway to be made good. A vast amount of the ministers' time and energy is spent in getting little things done which the representatives of the old order do not like. The conflict inherent in the constitution is always there in spite of all attempts to cover it up, and even though it may not see the light of day, it eats up their time and energy, and important work suffers. The old services, even with goodwill which is not always present, cannot be the agents of the great changes that the Congress wants to introduce. They have been brought up in a different tradition and their competence is largely confined to work in the ancient ruts of an irresponsible imperialist administration. An attempt to leave the ruts fills them with apprehension, and where we demand and require a flaming enthusiasm for the new order, we get a reluctant passivity. It is difficult to carry on effective work in this way and our over-worked ministers live a care-worn and exhausting life. They deserve our fullest sympathy in their thankless task.

We see in India today a rapid development of social forces and sometimes of social conflict. The Congress, representing as it does different forces, itself becomes to some extent the forum for these conflicts. We have thus certain disrupting tendencies and, at the same time, the strong unifying tendency which has held us together for so long. I have no doubt that the unifying tendency must be made to triumph for any other outcome would do great injury to our cause. Much has happened recently before and during our Congress elections, which has made many of us think hard, and pained us greatly. I do not wish to discuss these matters here except to say that the spirit of faction is far too evident. Inevitably there is a right wing of the Congress and a left wing and various middle groups, though this simple classification sometimes misleads. An attempt to drive out the left, if successful, would be fatal for it represents a vital

2. See p. 538 and p. 567.

part of the movement without which it would lose much of its flair and become increasingly wedded to petty reformist activities. It would spread confusion in the mass mind, more especially among the peasantry, and thus weaken the Congress. I feel that some such attempt has been made during recent months and it has created considerable bitterness.

Certain leftist elements in the Congress and outside have also erred and thus themselves partly created a situation which has done them harm. There has been too much of a tendency to take advantage of a temporary mass excitement, too much of an identification of their own wish-fancies with the supposed urges of the masses, sometimes a support of methods which are not in consonance with the Congress policy, sometimes a support of wrong action for fear of losing influence with the people. Such a policy is likely to become adventurist and bring at least temporary failure in its train.

We have to hold to our anchor and not allow ourselves to be swept away in these grave times by momentary excitement, or by party strife, or by desire of temporary gain at the cost possibly of the larger good. We have to remember that during these many years we have tried, not without success, to function politically on an unusually high ethical plane, and we have to live up to these standards of integrity in public affairs which we have so often proclaimed. We may not forget that nonviolence is not a mere phrase for us, but a deliberate policy which we have adopted and pursued with remarkable results. It is true that many who talk loudly of truth and nonviolence have little to do with either, and they use these terms for narrow purposes of their own. Nevertheless truth and nonviolence have to be adhered to by us to the best of our ability. What will this game of politics be worth for us if we lose our ideals and tarnish our integrity?

We have seen recently a strange and disturbing outburst of communalism. We have welcomed the new orientation of the Muslim League with its objective of independence. We have welcomed the rapidly rising political consciousness of the Muslims, which has sent large numbers of them to the Congress, and moved large numbers of others to function outside the ranks of the Congress. But the communalism that these latter have exhibited has been distressing, for separatism is always a sign of backwardness. But far more distressing has been the singular lack of decency and the ordinary standards of public life that has been in evidence. Violence has often been encouraged and has already led to some deplorable occurrences.

But this will pass and what will remain is the new awakening among the Muslim masses. It will pass if the Congress holds hard to its policy of treating all minorities with not only full justice but generosity so as

to gain their confidence and goodwill. It will pass because other and more vital problems confront us. It is the peasant who is beginning to dominate India, and it is to him and his kind that we shall have to go again and again, and if we find favour in his eyes and give him relief from his age-long bondage, it is well with us. But it will not be well with us if we fail him and do not keep the promises we made to him.

I believe as firmly as ever that only socialism will solve our problems as also those of the rest of the world. But the fundamental tasks before us at present are two: to put an end to imperialism, and to end the relics of feudalism in the states and in our land system.

2. The Congress and Federation[1]

The Congress will not under any circumstances whittle down its opposition to federation. I am surprised to see all kinds of irrelevant subjects being brought into the discussion. We must remember that we are now faced with big issues. I want to know what is going to be our stand on the constitutional crises in Bihar and the United Provinces?[2]

I disapprove of so many amendments having been moved to the resolution.[3] I would like that the Congress during every session discussed only one or two important resolutions in which could be brought every outstanding problem of the day. To some extent, I can understand the anxiety of the members that the Congress might whittle down its opposition to federation. But we should remember that today the Congress is a gigantic organisation and that members of the Working Committee are only too well aware of their responsibility and therefore their words, as embodied in the resolution, have the fullest import of what they convey.

1. Speech on Bhulabhai Desai's resolution opposing federation at the subjects committee meeting at the Haripura Congress, 18 February 1938. From *The Hindu* (evening edition), 18 February 1938.
2. The Congress ministries in Bihar and U.P. had resigned on 15 February 1938 as the Governors of these provinces did not agree to the release of all political prisoners. The Governors later backed down.
3. M.R. Masani's amendment had wanted the Congress to make it clear that unless complete independence was given to the people of India, the Congress would not accept federation. Z.A. Ahmad's amendment wanted the Congress committees to cooperate with the other anti-imperialist organisations for fighting against the inauguration of federation.

There is no need to say that we are going to fight federation.[4] There is no point in saying that at this juncture. Regarding the suggestion of direct action, what other weapon have we in our armoury? It must be either threat of direct action or direct action itself. So what is the point in laying it down as a part of our decision to oppose federation?

Then there is the demand for uniting with kisan and other organisations. I am in sympathy with some of these, and some others I do not like, but, all the same, I would undoubtedly cooperate with every one of you to fight a common foe, whatever differences we might have. What particular advantage would we have by saying that we will cooperate with other anti-imperialist organisations, or that we will resort to direct action to fight federation? The status of the subjects of the Indian states has been brought into the discussion.[5] I may assure you that I feel very strongly on this subject, but a resolution on federation is not the occasion to deal with that issue. And what is the use of rubbing in the question of Indian states at every conceivable opportunity? We are only doing harm to the Indian states by this attitude. We are face to face with big issues. What reply are we going to give to the country on the crisis with which we are now faced? The British are not going to leave our shores on hearing threatening speeches. I assure the House that the fact that some British leaders have toured the country[6] should not lead us to the conclusion that the Congress would whittle down its opposition to federation. I wish you to study carefully the proper resolution[7] and see if it does not embody our viewpoint completely. Remember clearly the implications of the federal scheme, which is nothing short of an attempt to bind us down for ever.

The Working Committee has huge and heavy responsibilities. Their decisions affect the history of India and the destinies of millions of her population. The Working Committee, therefore, cannot be expected to indulge in any irresponsible talk. It cannot make itself responsible for reckless and undignified talk as you and I sometimes indulge in, in our individual capacities. One of the previous speakers had urged the freedom of the vote. I endorse that suggestion, but I am afraid I cannot

4. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya's amendment proposed that if the federation were foisted on India it would be combated in every way "leading to direct action for the overthrow of the constitution and preparation for convening of a constituent assembly."
5. N.G. Ranga moving another amendment had said: "the proposed federation if imposed without reforming the states would not only encourage separatist tendencies but further tighten British imperialist hold upon India."
6. See pp. 378-379.
7. See p. 379.

agree with some of the suggestions of the previous speakers to lay our cards on the table as to what methods exactly we have in mind for fighting the federal menace.

When we talk of resorting to direct action or taking kisans or trade unions with us, we do not talk of fighting the federal scheme. Such talk serves only to deflect attention from the supreme task of fighting the federation. The Congress today is very different from other organisations. You may say there is no harm in allowing a rat to walk in the company of an elephant, but does that make a rat an elephant?

To weigh the Congress and the States People's Conference in the same balance is a mockery. These comparisons detract from the dignity and prestige of the Indian National Congress. If you say, 'Do fight for freedom, but at first bargain with the States People's Conference', will it not look ridiculous?

The constitutional crises in Bihar and the U.P. are big issues about which we are expected at the present moment to give directions as to how our ministers should conduct themselves. I hate to talk big on any and every issue and give knocks with hard words. But that does not mean that I want to give in to the British Government on the federation issue. We must go forward to implement our decision, but before we do so, we must collect our thoughts.

3. The Congress and the Indian States[1]

I wish to invite your attention to the resolution passed ten years ago by the Calcutta Congress which had clarified the Congress position.[2] To say that the Congress does not concern itself with the welfare of states is utterly wrong and a misinterpretation of the Congress attitude. It is beyond comprehension how the Indian National Congress claiming to fight to secure independence for all India could, even for a moment, leave out of consideration such a great part of the country as out of its scope. It is utterly unthinkable. How can we picture a free India without freedom for the states that run throughout the length and breadth

1. Speech at the subjects committee meeting at the Haripura Congress, 18 February 1938. From *The Hindu*, 19 February 1938.
2. It said: "This Congress assures the people of the Indian States of its sympathy with and support in their legitimate and peaceful struggle for the attainment of full responsible governments in the States."

of the land, spread everywhere in profusion, intermingled with the other territories surrounding them or separating them? It is our right and duty to fight as much for the people of those states as for others. For our goal is a unified and undivided India. But the states are in a slightly different category as regards their nature and structure. In these numerous states, there thrive many such ideas and people not of today but those discarded some time back. It is, therefore, meet and proper that we apply different methods of approach and plan a different line of action, suited to the conditions of these states, and strive to bring them in line with us and make them play their rightful part in the national struggle. I wish to assure you that there never has been even the thought of not including in our great movement the states that are part and parcel of our country.

My views on Indian states are very well known. I hold very strong views and my position is that I cannot tolerate even for a short while the continuance of states in their present form. Their very existence oppresses me. In them, I see exemplified two things—the feudal order and British imperialism—both of which I dislike intensely. It is not correct to argue that by this resolution the Congress is trying to wash its hands off the states and pursue a policy of non-interference.[3] It is physically impossible to separate the problem of Indian states from that of the rest of India. I have no doubt this matter is now cleared up and there is not even a shadow of doubt.

The first half of the resolution stresses the objective of independence.[4] That is common both for British Indian subjects and Indian states' subjects. While this is recognised, it is absurd to talk of non-interference. It is with this background that I approach this subject. All of us have deeply pondered over the subject. We may differ in our approach to this question but our objective is the same. We are absolutely of one mind that it is the duty of every one of us to work for the realisation of the Congress ideals in the Indian states.

3. The resolution stated: "Congress, therefore, directs that for the present Congress committees in states shall function only under the direction and control of the Working Committee and shall not engage in any parliamentary activities nor engage in direct action in the name and under the auspices of the Congress nor undertake internal struggle of people of the states in the name of the Congress."

4. "The Congress stands for the same political, social and economic freedom in the states as in the rest of India and considers the states an integral part of India which cannot be separated. The Purna Swaraj or complete independence, which is the objective of the Congress, is for the whole of India, inclusive of the states, for the integrity and unity of India must be maintained in freedom as it has been maintained in subjection..."

You must remember that there have been in the past, both in the Congress and in the A.I.C.C., occasions when conflicts arose over the subject of Indian states. There have been very unwholesome debates creating an atmosphere which is injurious to the interests of the people of the Indian states.

At Calcutta a resolution was adopted condemning repression in Mysore and subsequently certain events happened which resulted in creating an atmosphere which instead of proving helpful to the agitation had an adverse effect.[5] This thing had troubled me greatly and I tried to think about it and analyse the situation in my mind. I thought how we could help this struggle in the states. May I now say something, perhaps in criticism of that resolution, because I did not personally like the resolution which came before the All India Congress Committee at Calcutta in regard to the language and certain phrases of it? But the essential part of that resolution, regarding the condemnation of repression in Mysore, I wholeheartedly endorse, because in the course of my presidentship I had had a lot to do by way of correspondence in regard to the affairs in Mysore with all sorts of people. I speak with some knowledge on the subject and with that knowledge I can say definitely what happened in Mysore deserved the severest condemnation from the All India Congress Committee.

It may be that some people in the states erred, but on the whole the states' people carried on the agitation with resolution. And certain consequences followed. It is not good enough for us to act in that manner, more specially now when we have to face big problems and big crises. It would be better, perhaps, if we tone down our resolution and tone up our activity slightly, so far as the use of the Congress name is concerned, and push forward and prepare good ground for action not only in British India but also in the states. Today a remarkable awakening is taking place all over India, including the Indian states. We, on our part, must try to nurse it, cherish it; and above all we must organise ourselves.

We are all agreed on this. The most controversial point in the Working Committee's resolution related to the clause which banned the organisation of Congress committees in the Indian states. Personally, I would welcome the formation of as many Congress committees as possible all over India. But during all these years how many committees have been formed? Except for a few that existed "in the imagination of the faithful", the use of the Congress name by these organisations, which were placed under different circumstances, was more a hindrance than a help.

5. See pp. 561-580.

During my presidentship, I had on many occasions advised the Mysore Congress Committee not to launch civil disobedience against the Durbar's order although I had all the while felt that the Mysoreans had the perfect right to do so. But the Congress, which for the moment was following a different policy, could not get embroiled in civil disobedience in the Mysore state with its implications and repercussions in other parts of the country. So what help did the Mysore Congress Committee get from us? For carrying out the constructive policy of the Congress, there were all-India organisations working independently of the Congress. Therefore Congress committees in the states were not required to do this. Thus the use of the Congress name by the states' committees was definitely a hindrance to them and thoroughly useless. It is best to face facts. It might be that in a year or two conditions in the states might change. In fact, I feel that this would happen earlier than the people believed and then the Congress could certainly reconsider the position. But as it is, it would be better for the states' people to depend on themselves and not to look outside for help from the Congress. I want to assure the states' people that this resolution in no way goes back in the slightest degree on the Congress attitude towards the states' people. But the question that has become vital is that we must face realities and march independently towards our common goal.

4. The Congress and Burma[1]

It is difficult to explain the Congress attitude on the question of Burma. Burma is neither a province of India nor a part of it. It would be absurd to say that the Burma Congress Committee stands for the freedom of India and not of Burma.[2] We do not want Burma to remain a colonial province of India. I do not want to attach much importance to the fact of the separation of Burma. I have always treated it from a realistic point of view. The conditions in Burma are different and most of the resolutions passed by the Congress have no bearing on them. It would be wrong also to treat Burma as a foreign colony like Malaya where there are a large number of Indians. Burma's associa-

1. Speech at the subjects committee meeting at the Haripura Congress, 19 February 1938. From *The Hindu*, 19 February 1938.
2. Consequent upon the separation of Burma from India, the subjects committee at the Haripura Congress approved its removal from the list of Congress provinces in the Congress constitution, and creation in its place of a new Burma committee to work for the freedom of the people of Burma.

tion with India and the Congress is very old. Unfortunately, the majority of the Burma Congress Committee's members are Indians and only a small number of Burmans have participated in it. I hope that more Burmans will join the Congress committee. The present change is only an attempt to face reality and get over certain difficulties.

5. On the Rights of Minorities[1]

Mr. President, Brothers and Sisters,

I am reading this resolution in English.[2] In Indian politics the question of majority and minority often crops up. Our countrymen look at this question in a strange manner and even after thinking over it they are unable to understand what this question is and why they fear each other. You must have seen that during the last few years several things have happened in India, one of which is that the majority has advanced towards the Congress. During the last 20 years large numbers of our Muslim brothers fought for independence. Since 1921 several such occasions came when our Muslim brothers were with us in lakhs. In the movement of 1930-31, ten to fifteen thousand Muslims went to jail. Last year the Muslims joined the Congress in a very large number. Not only the Muslims but the Christians, the Jews and the people of several other communities which are in a minority in our country also joined the Congress. In this resolution we have expressed our pleasure on their joining the Congress. Our effort is still continuing. We want that people of every community in India should join this struggle. You must be remembering that such a resolution was passed at the Lucknow session of the Congress and a programme of mass contact presented before us.[3] Since

1. Jawaharlal moved a resolution on minority rights at the Haripura Congress session on 20 February 1938. This is a translation of his speech in Hindi on the occasion and printed in the *Report of the Fifty First Indian National Congress*, February 1938.
2. The resolution, passed by the A.I.C.C. on 20 February 1938, declared that Congress "regards it as its primary duty and fundamental policy to protect the religious, linguistic, cultural and other rights of the minorities in India and will give widest scope for their development and their participation in the fullest measure in the political, economic and cultural life of the nation".
3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 222.

Gandhiji gave a new colour to the Congress we have been thinking over this problem. We discussed this problem at the Lucknow Congress. We said that our objective was mass contact. At Faizpur we emphasized this very thing that the message of the Congress be carried to every home, to the homes of the Hindus and Muslims both. In the last election our attempt was to spread the Congress message from door to door and bring it home to every community—Hindu, Muslim and Christian.

We conveyed the message to every home. On behalf of the Congress sufficient work is being done among the Muslims and its result has been good. Even then some people had taken exception to it. They ask what right has the Congress to work among the Muslims. Likewise, others can ask what right the Congress has to work among the Sikhs. Hindus can ask what right the Congress has to work among the Hindus. But they do not understand that the Congress is not a communal organisation. The Congress is a political organisation whose aim is complete independence. At the same time our country is very poor. We have to remove its poverty. We have to remove the poverty and slavery from this country. As for the political and economic questions, the Congress is ready to help everyone. Its doors are open to everyone. We cannot solve these problems on a communal basis. Had the Congress not been there today it would have been incumbent on me, you and all of us to create such an institution whose doors were open to everyone. If we raise separate voices on a communal basis it would be of no avail. The door of the Congress is open to every Indian. It is closed only for those who do not want full independence. And whoever wants full independence, for him it is open. Despite this it is repeatedly said that if India becomes independent it would be for a particular community. But this is not true. Only a fool or a brainless person can think in terms of Hindu and Muslim rule. There can never be such a rule. If there is any rule it would be only Indian rule. Today we have to see what is there in the Congress which can jeopardize the interests of the Muslim or Christian brethren. Swaraj is for all—rich and poor. You should understand this fully well that in regard to religious matters everyone should have complete freedom. Everyone should have religious freedom.

The kisans in our province are very unhappy. Hindus and Muslims both are laden with debts. You know that in the Punjab the Hindu-Muslim problem is very complicated. Despite this there is no communalism among the kisans and the small zamindars. They want the burden of their debts to be lightened. Everyone of them has the same problem.

It is also important that people should have regard for the culture, manners and language of every community. There have been long debates on the question of national language. What is its outcome? We should have one national language. It does not mean that if you are a Gujarati all your work will not be done in Gujarati. Instead, in Gujarat the people will be completely free to do their work in Gujarati; in Madras they will be free to do their work in Tamil and Telugu; in the Frontier they will be free to do their work in Pushtu. Everybody will be free to do his work in his own language in his province. This also we should understand that in regard to culture and education people will have full freedom. In regard to these matters there should be no conflict whatsoever. There can be differences in political views. Between the zamindars and the farmers, the labourers and the millowners, there cannot be any communal question. There may be conflicts between a zamindar and a farmer, between a millowner and a labourer, but they cannot be called Hindu-Muslim conflicts. Even so people call them Hindu-Muslim conflicts and break each other's heads. This is not a matter of principle. According to the principle, all of us should be free to do whatever we like. Unfortunately in our country there are a large number of foolish people and among them there are mostly educated people who discuss political problems and often the conflicts emanate from them. In the Punjab Assembly the Muslims are in a large number. Even then why are there conflicts? If you study it carefully you will find that wherever there is the Hindu-Muslim question it is started only by a few upper-class people. The middle class is not benefited by it. Instead, it suffers loss. The big people quarrel over trifles like government service, membership of the councils, etc. These days a new question has cropped up. It is about ministries. But it is a question of a handful of people. These upper-class people dupe the Hindus, Muslims and Christians and make them fight for their own benefit. I am very happy that the Muslim League has declared full independence as its goal. But by its other utterances it seems that its sole policy is to abuse and malign the Congress. But this is not proper. For the last eighteen to twenty years Congress has been functioning as a dignified organisation and lakhs of people are its members. In the Muslim League there are people who are well educated. But only recently I was taken aback after hearing their speeches. Several times I tried to understand what the matter was after all and whether there was any fundamental issue in it. What do they want to say? Generally their complaints are about the Congress ministries and about the language. They raise the question of the Urdu language. Now they have raised a new question. It is about the *Bande*

Mataram song which they say stands for the Hindu state. But this has been proved to be totally false. The purpose of raising this question is merely to create a rift. About the Hindi-Urdu controversy Mahatmaji had approved of an agreement at Karachi.[4] As a matter of policy the Congress wants the Hindustani language.

Now take the question of *Bande Mataram*. The *Bande Mataram* has been in vogue for thirty years and no one ever objected to it. Despite this, about the last portion of the *Bande Mataram*, to which some exception can be taken, four months back the Congress Working Committee decided in Calcutta that generally it might not be sung.[5] As regards the first portion there is not even a single word in it to which anyone can object. There are some difficult Bengali and Sanskrit words in it which one cannot follow easily. But a song which has been connected with our political life for thirty to forty years cannot be discarded by any kind of threat. We have to advance in our struggle for freedom. Many of our brothers and sisters who have come here as delegates know how for the last eighteen to twenty years we have been involved in so many minor and futile issues. It is my earnest request that if someone could speak on this and plead in a proper manner, then the Working Committee and the A.I.C.C. would be ready to settle all the issues connected with it. But please do remember that the Congress has some principles. It cannot give up those principles. As far as the minorities are concerned we are always ready to make a settlement with them. In this resolution nothing new has been said. If you study it and read the Working Committee resolution carefully you will find how clearly the rights of the minorities have been mentioned therein. Congress has declared what path we will adopt. If there is any point at dispute, Congress is ready to settle it. The Congress has expressed its views very clearly and quite fearlessly. Ours is a democratic organisation and our main aim is to fight the British Empire. The question of majority and minority has been deliberately raised in slave countries. Imperialism always tries to see that the question of majority and minority is kept alive and nationalism receives a setback. These days the problem of Palestine has also become complicated like this. You must be aware that Englishmen arrived there only 20

4. Speaking on the resolution on fundamental rights at the Karachi Congress in March 1931, Mahatma Gandhi had said: "though I am sure that Islamic and Aryan cultures are not mutually exclusive and fundamentally different, I must recognise that Musalmans look upon Islamic culture as distinctive from Aryan. Let us therefore cultivate tolerance. Let us try to learn the Urdu language and Urdu script and understand the Musalman's insistence on it."

5. See p. 236.

years back. Prior to that, for 1,500 years, the Jews, the Muslims and the Arabs had been living there. But the Arab-Jew question never arose between them. No sooner than imperialism stepped in, the Arab-Jew relations became strained and assumed serious proportions.

We do not know where this problem will lead us. But in my opinion its growth is to be attributed to imperialism. If we became successful in our fight against imperialism and British rule came to an end, it would assume a different form altogether. As long as the British ruled, this communal voice against the Congress would continue to be raised. Today, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Parsis are joining the Congress in lakhs. Vested interests are therefore afraid of its growing power. They fear that their control over the masses will be removed. Therefore they want to spread communal feelings among them. In order to establish their own leadership they adopt wrong means and spread communalism in the name of freedom. When we were fighting against imperialism and were in jails, the people of the Independence Party[6] who today pose to be the supporters of freedom were against us.

It is the duty of the Congress to go halfway to meet the minorities and allay their fears. In this resolution there is nothing to feel perturbed about. The Congress wants to adopt such a policy which would be found satisfactory by all the people. I hope you, the delegates to the All India Congress Committee, will consider this resolution fully well before its adoption, keeping in view your position and responsibility.

6. See p. 121.

6. On the Hunger Strike by Political Prisoners[1]

There is only one amendment moved so far urging the deletion of the portion which refers to hunger strike by political prisoners.[2] On this issue I propose to explain the position of the Working Committee clearly. We are not condemning the hunger strike resorted to by the Andamans prisoners, nor censuring them. We only want to state our point

1. Speech at the subjects committee meeting at the Haripura Congress, 20 February 1938. *The Hindu*, 21 February 1938.
2. Sardar Patel had moved the resolution disapproving the hunger strike by the political prisoners in the Punjab. Sohan Singh Josh opposing it said: "Sir Sikandar's government calls our patriots murderers and dacoits. Our efforts in the assembly have failed. I request you not to join in the condemnation of hunger strike."

of view, since Congress has never before announced its views about hunger strike. But in doing so the Working Committee did not disapprove of the action already resorted to by the political prisoners in the Andamans or elsewhere.

Hunger strikes by prisoners have complicated the problem of their release rather than helped it. In several cases hunger strikes have actually impeded efforts to secure the release of prisoners and we should resist the temptation to go on a hunger strike. I don't think it proper that one should go on a hunger strike to secure release.

Hunger strike is a very serious and dangerous weapon. I do not say that political prisoners should, under no circumstances, resort to hunger strikes in order to ventilate their grievances. Occasions may certainly arise when political prisoners may have no other alternative. But still we must discourage the application of this dangerous weapon with a view to securing release.

Mr. Munshi Ahmed Din[3] has told us here this morning that the Punjab political prisoners have not resorted to hunger strike in order to secure release but for the mitigation of many humiliating and dehumanising jail regulations. I will still appeal to you to be clear about this. It is an extreme step and should not be encouraged.

The resolution moved by Sardar Patel is the most important resolution of the present session of the Congress. All the time we had been considering other resolutions, our minds were occupied with this crisis. In fact, we had our eyes on the clouds that had gathered on the horizon. I agree with Mr. Masani who said that we should mobilise for the fight. And as I take a peep into the future, I say this problem does not concern only Bihar and U.P. but all the provinces.

Englishmen expressed surprise that we were so calm and quiet while the crisis was impending. Such people are ignorant of the past history of the Congress. We have always worked with a cool head and with smiling faces. We give an opportunity to the other side to retrace its steps. Our resolution may appear outwardly cold and even mild but we have calculated all that is to follow in the wake of the present crisis.

The Governor has made statements relating to certain activities of the Kakori prisoners.[4] Nobody would say that the Kakori prisoners were

3. (1899-1967); a leading Congressman of the Punjab.
4. Following the resignation offered by the U.P. Congress ministry on the issue of the release of political prisoners, the secretary to the Governor of U.P. said: "Those for whose release they pressed, in particular, were prisoners who had been convicted in the Kakori case which dealt with an elaborate conspiracy extending over a considerable period in course of which a number of dacoities and murders were committed."

murderers and dangerous people. They were brave men who had no axe to grind and who risked their lives not for personal benefit. It is possible that after fifteen years of incarceration, completely shut off from the outside world, the released prisoners may have committed some mistakes or uttered what they should not have. But after having personal talks with some of them, I am confident that they no longer believed in their old methods.

I am glad that Mr. Dubash has spoken on this resolution.[5] It is good that the comrades of the Kakori Conspiracy Case stand before us and have expressed their views honestly and sincerely. It is clear that these prisoners have sincerely changed their views. This new orientation in their political outlook should not be interpreted as mere opportunism. I have talked with many of them and I can assure you that they have sincerely abjured their previous creed. We have not coerced them to accept our creed. We have given a pledge to the millions of voters that we shall secure the release of our political prisoners. I am glad we have unflinchingly striven to honour our pledges.

5. Durgashankar Dubash, a Kakori case prisoner, had said: "the Andaman prisoners had realised that days of terrorism had gone and it was not out of selfish motive to seek liberty that they said this; but they had come to subscribe to the Congress creed and had honestly and sincerely decided to work the Congress programme."

7. To N.S. Hardikar[1]

Khali
March 14, 1938

My dear Hardikar,

... I think some kind of all-India direction and control is necessary for our volunteer organisation, but, apart from this, I think the provincial Congress committees should be given a fair amount of freedom to organise volunteers on the general lines laid down by the Working Committee or some volunteer board nominated by it.

I feel that the work the Seva Dal has done during the last 15 years or so, though useful, has not borne as much fruit as it ought to have

1. N.S. Hardikar Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

done. We have worked too much from above and made the structure top heavy. We have given some training to a few hundred persons, but most of these have got lost in their cities or villages, and the gain to us has not been much, while the cost has been considerable. I was greatly impressed by the Khudai Khidmatgars. These have grown up from below, chiefly from the villages, and have spread with remarkable rapidity. They have hardly cost anything. It is true that they vary greatly in efficiency and otherwise and there may be undesirables among them. But, generally speaking, they represent a higher level and they help greatly in keeping the people up to the mark. They represent an ideology of disciplined service and (to the extent they understand it) of nonviolence. It is these Khudai Khidmatgars who have been the backbone of the movement in the N.W.F.P. and it is they who have helped to keep it peaceful.

I think we should profit by their example in several ways:

(i) by building from below;
(ii) by not spending too much money on the superstructure;
(iii) by allowing the undoubted sentiment in favour of volunteering which exists almost everywhere to take shape without undue restrictions from above, but always guided from above; and
(iv) thus trying to build up a kind of mass movement in favour of volunteering.

I look upon volunteer organisation from two points of view:

(i) to build up a rather loose organisation on a mass basis as indicated above; and
(ii) to have a chosen body of well-trained persons, relatively small in numbers but of a higher mettle. These to come out of (i).

For the mass organisation which we encourage to grow up in villages, etc., some simple rules should be laid down and for the rest each village should be asked to raise its own volunteers for local work. Where possible we should of course try to reach them and train them, but our incapacity to reach or train all of them should not be a bar to their formation. In one way, however, we should try to reach all of them, and that is through printed leaflets giving directions for training, work, etc. For the rest we should largely leave them, to begin with, to their own resources.

The general directions to these village or town units should consist of

(i) how to form and train themselves—some simple rules;
(ii) stress on nonviolence and acting always in a truthful way;
(iii) idea of service and cooperation. I think each village unit should undertake some practical work from time to time, say, once a week or fortnight. They could clean up the whole village; or build huts; or roads and pathways; help in village reconstruction work; or make playgrounds for the children; or run literacy classes if they can manage them; or help in the fields; or do so many other things. While helpful suggestions might be made, the initiative might be left to them;
(iv) they should all meet together once a week for a march. They might go to a neighbouring village and meet another unit. This should be in the nature of a holiday to promote *esprit de corps* and develop the cooperative spirit. National songs should be sung in community fashion;
(v) some simple scouting rules should be taught;
(vi) they should be told definitely that as volunteer units they must be absolutely clean from party politics within the Congress which is becoming a damnable curse;
(vii) they should keep in touch with headquarters and send reports of their activities. Headquarters, on their part, sending people, whenever possible, to train, help and inspect. But as I view this development, much of the instruction will inevitably be through leaflets which will teach such subjects as how to organise a meeting, how to control crowds without pushing or shouting, etc., apart from the subjects mentioned above.

I would not ask these volunteers (the mass organisation) to take any complicated pledges. They should promise faithfully to abide by the basic rules of the organisation (nonviolence, truth, service, discipline, cooperation among themselves). No other pledges are necessary for them.

The other class of volunteers, the chosen ones, will require a stifter training, higher standards, and a greater ideological preparation. For these a textbook might be prepared.

I think we should begin by concentrating on the first class of volunteers—the loose organisation, chiefly in the villages but also in the towns. For this purpose a central board should frame simple directions, and the P.C.Cs should draw up further rules if necessary to suit their special conditions.

The central board should then draw up more detailed rules for the second class of volunteers (the selected ones). They should undergo training for a fixed period, say, three months, and later on should give some time every year to practical service. Out of these trained selected volunteers we can get our instructors and inspectors for the first class of volunteers.

This is a very hastily written and imperfect note but I am sending this to you as it may give you some idea of how my mind is working. It would work more efficiently and concisely if I knew that something definite was going to be done. It is difficult to work in the air. For some time past there has been talk of reorganising our volunteers but nothing has come of it, though there are signs of awakening in some provinces. It is now possible either to organise on some definite all-India basis under the directions of the Working Committee or to leave it to the P.C.Cs to do as they think best. Or, as we have done in the past, to let matters drift.

There is one other matter which I think I should mention and Gandhiji has hinted at it also. Gandhiji and several members of the Working Committee have not got much faith in your manner of doing work. I have not been able to find out exactly why this is so although I tried to do so. There was, I believe, some article that you wrote three years ago to which exception was taken. At my request you sent me an article written by you, but I was given to understand that this was not the article in question. I have seen no other article and so I am unable to judge. In any event if there is this want of faith in you, it will be difficult for you to work effectively. If such is the case then perhaps you had better work in a more restricted sphere. Your work will also depend on your state of health. For some time to come you ought not to exert yourself too much. In any event clear indications should be given as to what should be done and where you can fit in, if you can fit in at all, in the work to be done.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Gandhiji to save time. I am also sending a copy to Subhas Babu who is deeply interested in volunteering and has no doubt definite ideas of his own....

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

15

GENERAL

PERSONAL

1. To Mohanlal Nehru[1]

Dehra Dun Jail
18.1.35

Dear Sir,
I am in receipt of your circular letter dated 8th January 1935 addressed to the trustees of the Swaraj Bhawan Trust.

The proposal that has been made to utilise the entire Swaraj Bhawan buildings and land for the purpose of a general hospital to be called 'Motilal Nehru Hospital' raises a number of issues which have to be carefully considered, and it is difficult for me to give a definite reply without consultation with my co-trustees. As I am not in a position to have this consultation, I am indicating to you briefly some ideas that I have had on the subject of Swaraj Bhawan and I shall be obliged if you will communicate them to the other trustees.

Your proposal involves four separate questions: (1) The utilisation of Swaraj Bhawan, (2) the inauguration of a memorial for Pandit Motilal Nehru, (3) the future of the Congress Hospital in Allahabad, and (4) the establishment of a general hospital in Allahabad to supply a badly felt need.

To take these in inverse order. As a citizen of Allahabad I would welcome the establishment of an up-to-date general hospital. In the event of such a modern hospital being started, the necessity for carrying on the present Congress Hospital would naturally cease and it could become merged in the new hospital and all its equipment and material would be presented to it. The Congress Hospital was started by my father as a temporary measure to meet a particular situation. It has been carried on because it was obvious that it was supplying a real need and giving medical relief to thousands in the neighbourhood. Partly also there was a sentimental disinclination to wind up something that had been started by my father. If a new hospital is started, that need will

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

be attended to by it and the sentimental consideration will not matter much.

In case the scheme for a new hospital does not materialise in the near future, it would be desirable to carry on the Congress Hospital for the present, if that is not financially impossible. Probably it will not be difficult to do so on the present modest scale. Since a nominal fee has been charged, a monthly income has come in. This may develop. If an additional Rs. 200/- or Rs. 250/- a month could be guaranteed, the immediate difficulties would recede into the background. I shall be glad to contribute Rs. 50/- a month. Indeed I contributed this sum indirectly from the beginning of 1932 to last year, during the period Swaraj Bhawan was in government possession, and the hospital was lodged without rent in my cottage. The hospital having gone back to Swaraj Bhawan, the cottage has been rented out and I suggest that the sum realised in rent be treated as my monthly donation to the hospital. If necessary, I am prepared to add to it.

This question of the upkeep of the present hospital or dispensary will of course not arise if the larger scheme of a new hospital is given effect to. But as the consideration of this may take time, it is as well to make arrangements to carry on.

It is mentioned by you that it is proposed to have a hundred beds in the new hospital. This is rather vague and does not convey much information. As you know there were at one time, in 1930 and 1931, twenty or thirty beds in Swaraj Bhawan. But beds do not by themselves make a good hospital, and it is by no means clear whether the intention of the Allahabad committee is to have a really up-to-date modern hospital or some small second-rate affair. The latter would only mean an extension of the present Congress Hospital. On the other hand, an up-to-date hospital with the latest modern apparatus and devices is a very expensive affair and its cost will run into many lakhs of rupees. It is doubtful if the rambling, spread-out Swaraj Bhawan building would be suited for this. A modern hospital requires a modern building especially built for it. The recurring expenditure will also be heavy.

Which of these two ideas has the Allahabad committee in mind? If the former, then it is hardly worthwhile making a great fuss about it and calling it by a grandiloquent name. If the latter, then the question of a building is almost a minor affair and all depends on the funds available. The trustees are asked to hand over Swaraj Bhawan on the vague assurance of a committee that they propose to have a hospital there. They can hardly be expected to discharge their trust by divesting themselves of it in such a manner and without knowing definitely that sufficient funds are already in sight for a proper use of the trust property.

If the Allahabad committee desire to have a general hospital and at the same time to have a local memorial to Pandit Motilal Nehru, they ought to go ahead with their scheme quite apart from Swaraj Bhawan. Of one thing they can be assured, that the Swaraj Bhawan authorities will help them in every way, and it is quite possible that eventually they may even offer them land or building. But it seems to me premature and improper for any promise to be made at this stage. This would not only depend on the hospital scheme and the money already collected but also on other considerations.

These other considerations are: the question of having an all-India memorial to Pt. Motilal Nehru and of associating it with Swaraj Bhawan. The proposed hospital can hardly take the place of such a memorial. It will be a local affair with largely a local appeal, though if it is on a big enough scale it may assume more importance. An all-India memorial to Pt. Motilal Nehru should ordinarily be inaugurated by his old colleagues of the Working Committee, Gandhiji and others, together with prominent men and women in other walks of life, and such a memorial should naturally be associated with Swaraj Bhawan. It should further the cause which he had at heart and for which he gave Swaraj Bhawan. (His letter containing the offer is clear enough on this subject).[2] A hospital is by no means excluded under the terms of the gift but there can be no doubt that other uses would be more appropriate.

The trustees and the Board of Management of Swaraj Bhawan have therefore to consider this larger question before they can dispose of Swaraj Bhawan in any way or bind themselves down to do so. I believe that various suggestions have been made vaguely but so far no serious consideration has been given to this subject owing to disturbed political conditions.

My own idea has been for some time (and I think some other trustees think likewise) that a museum of national growth and regeneration — political, economic, artistic and cultural — be established there, and together with it a library and study and a research institute. This national museum should be a picture of our recent (say, during the last fifty

2. Motilal Nehru, in a letter written to Jawaharlal on 27 March 1930, had stated: "We agreed . . . that having regard to the past history of the house and the stage we have now reached in the national struggle for freedom the most appropriate use to which it can be put is to make it the permanent headquarters of the Indian National Congress. This means that the offices of the All India Congress Committee will be permanently located in the house and parts of it not occupied by these offices will be utilized for other national purposes to be determined later in consultation with the members of the Working Committee."

years) growth, our struggles, failures and successes in various departments of the national and cultural activity. I would gladly give my library to this and I believe it will not be difficult to get widespread support in money and material for this idea. It would be novel and worthwhile and it would serve a definite purpose and attract both the serious student and everyone interested in India's immediate past and present.

The idea can be developed in many ways. I only wish to hint at it here. The whole scheme may well become an ambitious one and yet it will not require very large funds and it can develop from relatively small beginnings. If it had been possible for me I would have discussed this with my co-trustees, but as I cannot do so, I trust they will consider it among themselves.

Because I have this notion of utilising Swaraj Bhawan, and at the same time having an all-India memorial for my father, it is difficult for me to commit myself to this handing over of Swaraj Bhawan for a hospital or any other purpose. But I need hardly say that this does not mean any opposition on my part to the hospital scheme. I hope the scheme will be worked out and continued independently of Swaraj Bhawan. The Congress Hospital and its material will always be at the disposal of the promotors of the scheme, and later on it may be possible for the trustees of Swaraj Bhawan to help them in other ways.

The point is that the proposed hospital in Allahabad should not be treated as an all-India memorial to my father but more or less as a local effort, with outside support, and Swaraj Bhawan should not be tied up with it at present. A hasty step now may prevent us from developing worthwhile schemes later on.

I shall be glad if you will send a copy of this note to members of the Board of Management of the Swaraj Bhawan Trust. I agree that the President and the working secretary of the A.I.C.C. be co-opted to the Board required by the trust deed. This is a formal matter and need not require a meeting. But I would suggest to the trustees and the Board to have an early meeting to consider various proposals and make some arrangement for the future. Of course, I shall not be there but that is no reason why they should not meet.

This note may be shown to friends interested in the matter, but I would prefer that it was not given publicity in the press or otherwise. Some of the ideas I have expressed in it should be considered by the trustees before they are placed before the public.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. To Indira Nehru[1]

Almora Jail
May 26, 1935

Darling Indu,

Your letter and mummie's, sent prior to sailing from Bombay,[2] reached me today. I am replying to it immediately as my letter is already overdue. I shall send this by air mail, so also my future letters, which will of course go fortnightly. I have no idea when the air mail leaves but as there are frequent services now this does not matter much. I want you and mummie also to write by air mail direct to the Almora jail. I don't suppose I shall be transferred from this jail for some time. In case of my transfer I shall try to inform you.

I shall send my letters c/o Thomas Cook, Geneva. Also, any cable or wireless message that I might send. So please keep in constant touch with Cooks at Geneva. In the event of your settling down anywhere for some time, that address should immediately be communicated to me so that I can write direct. I have told Madan Bhai to send cables to Anand Bhawan and have arranged that they be sent on to me here. But tell him that in the event of an urgent message requiring a quick answer he might cable direct to me here. I don't suppose any special necessity for this will arise. After all, what can I advise or suggest from this distance? All decisions will have to be taken by you three, and it is as well that this should be so. We should all be self-reliant and depend upon ourselves. You know my general views and I have gone even further than I might have done in giving all manner of unnecessary details. That is a bad habit I have got into which even jail does not rid me of.

Our Bombay friends, and they are so many, were wonderfully good to you and did everything conceivable for your comfort in Bombay and during the voyage. That is very pleasing, of course, and yet I sometimes think there is danger in such abundant goodwill and help being showered on us! We get spoilt and begin to expect it everywhere as of right and when it is not forthcoming we feel grieved and cantankerous! We get into the habit of depending on others—a bad habit. Of course, in Europe you cannot expect all this personal attendance and help. That indeed is one of the advantages of going there and getting out of one's shell.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. Kamala Nehru sailed for Europe on 23 May 1935 for medical treatment.

I want you to write to Pilloo[3] and give her a message on my behalf. Curious that I should send a message to Bombay *via* Europe but such is life at present for us. I cannot write to her direct. Indeed I cannot write to anyone but you and mummie. Tell Pilloo that I think she is a perfect brick and that I am ever so grateful to her. And give her my love.

You must be in the Arabian Sea, as I write this, far from all land. On board also you will have abundance of kindness. There are many friends and the Lloyd Triestino people are decent. Besides, with the Italian Consul's letter and Scarpa at the other end you will have the shadow of Mussolini to help you and that is a mighty shade on an Italian boat. I have an idea that this is about the time when Mussolini's march on Rome[4] took place and if so this will be celebrated on board. Do you remember the celebration on board the 'Cracovia' in May 1931 with its songs and Blackshirts and *evvivas?* One of the very few things I like about Italian fascism is their song of youth—*Giovinezza*—with its haunting refrain.

You have a number of big guns on board. They are pretty dull people as a rule and do not look quite so big from close quarters. I am glad you met Mrs. S.K. Datta. I gather she is taking a crowd of Indian girls for a European tour. She does so every year. So you must have plenty of agreeable company. I have never met Mrs. Datta but I know Dr. S.K. Datta well and I think he is a very fine man. He was a friend and admirer of Dadu's. He felt Dadu's death so much that he gave up smoking, quietly, without any fuss. This was a very touching and graceful tribute to a friend, and it was a sacrifice for a smoker to give up a life-long habit.

I hope you are having a calm voyage and will escape the monsoon. And yet I almost wish that you—not mummie—might have experience of the monsoon on the high seas. There is a magnificence about the sea—with its great waves tossing about the little ship and huge showers of spray enveloping the decks. The cloud-bursts come with a peculiar fury and in the distance you might see what look like huge columns connecting the sea with the clouds above. Apparently the water is sucked up through these columns. Twice in my student days I passed through the Arabian Sea monsoon. Almost everybody on board, that is the passengers, was laid low and groaned all the way from Aden to Bombay! But I survived with about half a dozen other passengers and regularly

3. Shrimati Pilloo Vesugar, incharge of Tata scholarships abroad.
4. In fact, the march on Rome was in October 1922.

appeared for my feeds in the dining saloon. It was a job to walk about clinging to various objects, and food sometimes would hop about.

So you are going to Trieste and Vienna or shall I say Wien as the Austrians call it? My mind goes back a quarter of a century or more—I think it was in 1909—when I visited the place with Dadu and Shridhar Chacha. It was pre-war Vienna, charming and graceful, full of beauty and historic associations. It was the home of music of the gentler variety, of waltzes and comic operas and songs. Do you know the famous old Blue Danube waltz? Perhaps the younger generation have forgotten such dainty trifles in these days of the strident jazz. The Viennese were a peculiar and very happy mixture of the Germans and the Italians. Somehow they had managed to get many of the good qualities of both, and life seemed to flow, at the top at least, with a charming grace. But this was long, long ago, not so much in point of time as of a succession of tragic events. Vienna, proud Vienna, thousand-year-old Vienna, was very badly hit by the Great War and ever since then it has gone down and gasped for breath. Today it leads a precarious life in the shadow of an ever-impending tragedy.[5] No one can tell what its future will be. Only last year there was a dreadful civil war there.

But of course you will have nothing to do with all this and during your brief stay there you will see the surface of the great city only and may not even realise what lies behind it. But the glory has departed from Vienna, and I am sure that if I went there I would feel sad. It is or was one of the great cities which have a soul or a personality—like Rome and Paris and London—not Berlin. I remember being taken up a huge dome of a cathedral in Vienna from which we had a fine view of the city. And there on the dome were pointed out to us bullet marks, caused hundreds of years before, by the invading Turks who besieged the city.[6]

One thing modern Vienna produced after the war which was considered unique. This was a series of very fine workers' flats, beautiful palaces they were, where ordinary workers could live very cheaply. Many of these workers' buildings were knocked down in last year's civil war. Still they are very well worth a visit to see what a go-ahead municipality can do for the poorest of its citizens. Compare them to our mud hovels, if you have a chance to go to see them. If Nanu is there he can easily take you.

5. Englebert Dollfuss, the Austrian Chancellor, suspended parliamentary government in March 1933, and the next year suppressed the socialists, but in July 1935 he was himself murdered by the Nazis.
6. Vienna was besieged by the Turks in 1529 and 1683.

I hope Nanu is there with you and that you sent him a telegram on arrival at Trieste. He will not only be of immense help to you but his presence will save you a deal of money for he knows the place and the people.

It is good to visit Vienna and other places but I do hope that you will all soon settle down in good old bourgeois Suisse. I do not at all fancy mummie being carted about from place to place and I particularly hope that she will not have to go to Berlin. The sooner she gets settled down in Switzerland the sooner will you be able to settle down also with your work. Afterwards, when mummie is better of course, I would like you both to tour about a little. But there is no fun in travelling when ill. Your present movements will naturally depend on mummie's treatment and the possibility of an operation. Probably this matter will be decided within two or three weeks of your arrival. Will you please ask Madan Bhai to send me a fairly detailed cable about the advice of the Vienna physician on the desirability of an operation and future treatment?

Mummie and you will of course manage everything marvellously, as you say. You have no business to do otherwise for you have the family reputation to keep up! For the present the management will have to be done largely by you for mummie will have enough to do to look after herself. But I do want you to take personal interest in the arrangements, whether it is engaging hotel rooms, reserving accommodation on the railway or the many other things that will be cropping up. Do not put too much of a burden on Madan Bhai. You must get used to shifting for yourself or else later on you will have difficulties. Interest yourself in the money side too, so that you may know what is happening and can take charge whenever Madan Bhai happens to be away. I suppose Madan Bhai will have an account at Cooks at Geneva. This might be in your joint names—yours and his.

Meanwhile, keep in touch with Mlle. Hemmerlin.

My dear, I do not worry. I am not the pining sort. If I had been inclined that way I would have pined away already. But instead I prosper and fatten in the face of difficulties and adversities and I find life worth living because of them. When any action or work faces me I concentrate on it and try to do my best. When action is denied me I shut that drawer of my mind and open some other. And so now that I do little else I take a vast interest in my little jail garden and my flowers and seedlings and exercise such managing capacity on them as I possess and give them the benefit of my care and tenderness. The rain god has been playing us false and there has been practically no rain foi two months. But I am fighting this perverse creature—for my pugnacity

must find an outlet—and carefully utilising every little bit of water that I can lay hold of. Some of my little flower plants have dried up but on the whole I have kept my end up so far.

I live in my little tent for my barrack is under repairs. It is very hot in the middle of the day but I prefer this tent to the barrack for I have the starlit night above me and the tent gives me an illusion of travel. And though you may plough through the great ocean, my imaginary journeys are vaster and take me to greater distances.

This morning I had an interview with Raja and *chhoti puphi*. They came to Almora yesterday and returned to Bhowali today. The call of the baby was insistent. In my next interview, a fortnight hence, I hope to see Chand and Tara and Ritu. Dolamma is not well. I hope you will send her a few lines regularly. These will cheer her up tremendously. Also write to the *puphis* and keep them informed of your plans.

I have received a copy of Vol. 2 of the *Glimpses* and I gather that you have taken a number of copies with you. The book is formidable to look at and handle. You must be terrified at the prospect of reading it! I wish it had been split up into two volumes. Unfortunately it is full of misprints and minor errors. As I could not correct the proofs this was inevitable but none the less it is irritating. Probably you will not miss the meaning anywhere.

I had your telegram from Bombay. I am not writing separately to Madan Bhai. Tell him all that interests him and pertains to him in this letter.

And so *au revoir* and all my love,

Your loving
Papu

3. To Indira Nehru[1]

Badenweiler
15.1.36

Indu dear,

Yesterday morning I wrote to you that mummie was looking better. The aspiration with oil had been a success. In the afternoon she had a bad time with a cough, trying to bring out a lot of slimy stuff which

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

was troubling her. This seems to have been due to weakness of the heart which was not functioning properly. It was an attack of the kind she had on Dec. 22nd, only milder. It may have been partly due to the reaction from the oil, but chiefly, I suppose, from the exhaustion of high temperature for a long time. The attack did not seem to involve immediate danger but it was very exhausting indeed as it lasted for three or four hours. The night was a restless one with little sleep. It was not considered desirable to give her a strong sleeping draught as this has a numbing effect on the heart. The temperature also went up high during the night. Early in the morning—about 4—she fell sound asleep and she still sleeps as I write at 10.30.

I wrote to you about your German that you should do what you think proper after consultation with Mlle. Hemmerlin. It is difficult for me to advise without knowing much more of the kind of teaching that is given there. Generally speaking, it is desirable to keep up the thread of learning a language, as once broken, one has to begin afresh. It is preferable to give less time to it, to giving it up altogether. But these vague considerations must be applied to concrete facts. These facts can be considered best by you and Mlle. Hemmerlin.

I have received a provisional programme from London about my forthcoming visit. It is already pretty full and is likely to be a heavier one than last time. But it is more scientifically arranged and so easier to manage. I shall probably meet a number of authors and writers. You see I am myself supposed to be one of that fraternity since I wrote the *Glimpses*. It would have been a good thing if you had also met some of these people, for they are interesting. But you will have plenty of chances in future of meeting them. One must make oneself interesting—intellectually and otherwise—before one can meet other attractive folk on an equal footing. There is no reason why the interest should be on one side only.

We have been having misty and rainy days. I suppose that is so in the greater part of Europe. But the weather seems to be changing. Last night there was a slight frost here. I imagine that the snow will be back within a few days.

Love from mummie and

Your loving
Papu

4. To Indira Nehru[1]

London
30.1.36

Bien aimee,

For several days I have been thinking of writing to you. But all day I am out, rushing from one place to another, and I return very late at night dead tired. I write a few lines to mummie and that is all I can manage before weariness and sleep overpower me. I have an even heavier programme to face than we had on the last occasion. It is much more businesslike and scientific and carefully arranged. People come to fetch me from one place to another and everything fits in beautifully but my exhaustion grows as the day draws to a close. It is a different type of a programme. I am not going to Indian organisations or seeing many Indians—mostly I meet English people in groups or separately. I usually go out to feed in English houses.

I arrived at a peculiar time when the country seemed to be behaving in an extraordinarily sentimental and soppy way owing to the late king's death.[2] The newspapers were for many days full of the silliest stuff in black borders and hardly any news appeared. I am afraid I did not read them. I even missed the pomp and pageantry of the funeral. I was in my flat carrying on with my interviews while kings and princes and the like marched solemnly surrounded by vast crowds. From all accounts the crowds were prodigious. I should have liked to have seen them for I am interested in the psychology of crowds.

The flat I am staying in is not nearly as bright and cheerful as the Mount Royal one. It is an old style one patronised by retired colonels and their kind. I have two small rooms and a bath-room. It is a convenience to have a separate bedroom and a sitting room. There is also more of 'service'—maids, and valeting, etc.

The day I arrived here I had to go out to dinner with Lady Rhonda,[3] who is the daughter of a millionaire coal-miner. She showed great organising capacity during the big war and now owns and edits a weekly paper—*Time and Tide*—with socialistic sympathies.

***   ***   ***

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L. Incomplete.
2. George V died on 20 January 1936.
3. Author of *Leisured Women, This was My World* and *Notes on the Way;* died 1958.

5. To Indira Nehru[1]

Cairo
March 8, 1936

Darling,
Here am I again stopping at a very fashionable hotel, reeking of luxury and jazz and dancing, and enormous public rooms, and wide corridors, and crowds of waiters and dragomans and page-boys dashing about. I take advantage of the lovely bath-rooms by having two baths during my short stay.

When I left Marseilles I could see in the distance the snow-covered Alps, probably Mont Blanc was one of the peaks. Today, on rising from Rome, we had a fine view of the city and of St. Peter's. Later, in south Italy we crossed the Apennines with their peaks covered with snow and ice. We were flying high—about 4,500 metres which is, I think, over 14,000 ft. This means that we were not very much below the height of Mont Blanc. Our window-panes got covered with frost and it was difficult to see out. Again in Greece there were snow-covered mountains below us. The Athens landing ground was far from the city but we passed over the city and had a good and rather unusual view of the Acropolis.

The Mediterranean was of a wonderful colour—deep blue sometimes turning to emerald green near the coastline. A spot moved rapidly across the face of the waters—it was our shadow. Little islands were continually appearing and disappearing, cunningly shaped they were, fantastic little things dotted about over the blue sea, which crept inside them and sent its arms to embrace them. Over above them floated tiny wisps of clouds.

The great height at which we were flying made it just a little difficult to breathe with ease. The pressure of the atmosphere was less. At any rate, I experienced some slight discomfort. It was not much. Our plane is a beauty. It is a great big aluminium bug with two eyes sticking out over its nose and graceful wings stretching out on either side. It bears the name: *Perkoetet*, which in Dutch means, I think, wood pigeon or some such thing.

The height played strange tricks. A fellow passenger took out his fountain-pen. As he unscrewed the cap a fountain of ink splashed out. The lessening of atmospheric pressure had induced the ink to jump out in this way. The poor man's clothes were spoilt.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

We had five passengers in all, including myself. Two dropped out at Athens. So now we are three. One, a woman, is bound for Batavia. She is Dutch. The other, an Englishman, is going to Calcutta.

On arrival at the Cairo airport I found Fouad Bey waiting for me. He was the same as ever and embraced and kissed me. One of his first questions was about you. He told me that he might be going to Suisse next summer and if so he would visit you. I gave him your address. Also he impressed upon me that whenever you passed this way to India you must visit him or at least let him know so that he can come to see you. You might keep this in mind and note down his address. Here is the address:

Mr. Fouad Selim Bey Al-Higazi, 33 Sharia Dawawine, Cairo.

His wife is away and so I did not see her. But Bobby, his son, came round later and we had a long talk. He has grown of course and is a nice-looking boy. Fouad Bey told me that he was too full of politics to attend to his studies. He belongs to the *Bazis* (after the Nazis)—from *Baz*, a hawk. I was surprised to find how extremely naive he and others were about political matters. They seemed to know precious little and chiefly lived on enthusiasm. Even a little conversation with me was a revelation to him and he said that many of his old notions were upset and he was beginning to think on new lines.

It would be a graceful thing if you would send a few lines to Fouad Bey and tell him that you would be happy to see him when he comes to Suisse. This would cheer him up no end.

From tomorrow the deserts and then day after India.

Love,

Yours,
Papu

6. To Indira Nehru[1]

Allahabad
1.4.36

Darling mine,

Your letter of the 22nd March came today. What awful things examinations are to worry and harass us! I remember reading once a comparison made by a professor of the Sorbonne, many hundreds of years

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

ago, of examinations with the torments of purgatory, and he came to the decision that the former were worse. They are evil things, these examinations. Yet somehow they pursue us and we cannot quite get rid of them. But do not worry overmuch. I am sure you will do well. And if you think in June that you are not strong enough in Latin, and your teacher agrees with you, why, drop it for the time and appear in it later. But you have two months more and that is a fair period.

I hope you are already in Italy and feeling the charm and magic of that beautiful country. How I wish I was with you. My own visits to Italy have been too brief and I have always hungered for a closer acquaintance. To Sicily I have never been, and all I know of it is from the distant glimpses from on board the ship as we passed the Straits of Messina.

You have the spring. Here the brief spring is passing, though it is pleasant enough still, and the trees have dropped their leaves. Fans sometimes are necessary and the sun is hot.

Do you worry about my having time or not to write to you? I always have time for that. I like writing to you and it is a relief to me from care and work. It is true that I am well occupied and likely to be more so. Today I feel quite light and free. I had reserved five or six days for writing my presidential address for the Congress.[2] For three days I laboured hard at it all day, and late last night I finished it. Suddenly, as I finished it, I felt as if a burden was off my shoulders. It is not finally done with for I am likely to change it, but the first draft is off my hands. I do not usually change my original drafts but others might induce me to make changes. It is being typed now and I hope to send you a copy separately tomorrow by air.

I wrote to you about Gurudeva's tribute to mummie.[3] I saw it a little while ago and it moved me greatly. I am enclosing it. It is really a wonderful thing how mummie's personality has impressed millions of people. Nothing like it has happened to my knowledge in India. The tributes that have come from the most unexpected quarters have not been formal ones; they have been full of affection and sorrow and admiration. Character and dignity and quiet restraint, together with inner fire, have a way of stealing into the hearts of millions.

Many poems in English, Hindi and Urdu and other languages have been written. They are not good as poetry, often they are silly, but they

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 170-195.
3. For Rabindranath Tagore's tribute to Kamala Nehru see *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 166.

give some expression to this universal love which vast numbers felt for mummie. I enclose two such poems for you to see.

I am enclosing also a copy of some resolutions passed by the Working Committee at Delhi.

My Longines wrist watch, of which I have been so proud and which has given me uninterrupted service for nine years, suddenly stopped the other day to my astonishment. I had no other and I could not do without one, so I rushed to a local watch dealer and purchased a cheap West End one—an incassable. Three days later the Longines changed its mind and started functioning again, but I am a little doubtful of it now. It was curious that after returning from the home of watches I should have to buy one in Allahabad.

Your letter reached Dolamma today. She was greatly affected when she had it read out to her.

I have a fairly light day tomorrow—mostly letters. But from tomorrow night a stream of guests are coming. First Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya for a day or so. Then Bapu with his entourage and soon after the Working Committee crowd. We shall have a busy time and Anand Bhawan will be very full.

Would you like me to send you unusual foreign stamps? I get them pretty often. I have been giving many, which I received on condolence letters, to Chand.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

7. To Indira Nehru[1]

Nagpur
27.4.36

Darling Indu,

I have had a very strenuous three days in Nagpur—huge meetings and speeches one after the other, and the Hindustani literary conferences.[2] I have even ventured to hold forth on the development of Hindi literature, not knowing much about it! I am afraid I must live up, or try to

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. The twenty fifth All India Hindi Sahitya Sammelan was held at Nagpur from 24 to 26 April 1936.

do so, to the literary reputation I am acquiring. That will be a hard job. I feel I must improve my Urdu also. That will be even harder. But something of this kind must be done if we are to live in touch with developments of thought in our country.

We are just off to Wardha by car. There I intend remaining for two days and then I go back to Allahabad.

It has been very hot here, hotter than at Allahabad.

All my love,

Your loving
Papu

8. To Indira Nehru[1]

Allahabad
30.4.36

Darling mine,

I have just returned from Wardha by the Bombay Mail. It is late at night but the air mail goes early tomorrow morning and so I sit down to write to you.

I found two letters from you waiting for me here—one from Palermo and the other from Taormina. I am happy that you have been enjoying yourself in Sicily. I have been having a heavy time in Wardha. The physical strain was not so bad. I am used to that, but the continuous tug of war in the Working Committee is a most exhausting process and it distresses. I am afraid we are in for this continuous internal conflict, for different ideas fight for mastery. It is always difficult for people to give up old ideas in favour of new ones.

I have been travelling 3rd class. In this weather this is a bit of a trial but it is comforting to know that a good deal of money is being saved. The difference in cost between 3rd and the higher classes is very great.

I read in the train today a book I liked. It is an autobiography by Vincent Sheean,[2] a journalist, called *In Search of History*. It deals with the mental conflicts and development of a young man, and such books,

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. (1899-1975); American journalist; author of several books including *Personal History, Between the Thunder and the Sun* and *Nehru—The Years of Power.*

if they are sincere and well-written, are always worthwhile. This book is both. I think you will like it. Shall I send it to you? More or less it is a book. I think, on the lines of Anna Louise Strong's[3] book which Nanu sent you. I have not myself read the latter, but I would like to do so. When you have finished with it, could you send it to me?...

Love,

Papu

3. (1885-1970); American journalist known for her left-wing leanings; organised *Moscow Daily News*, 1930; deported from the Soviet Union in 1949 on charges of espionage which were withdrawn in 1955; her publications included *Songs of the City*, *Chinese Millions* and *I Change the World*.

9. To Indira Nehru[1]

Allahabad
4.5.1936

Darling mine,

Today I received your letter of the 21st April from Taormina. Your praise of this little place is enthusiastic and I have caught something of your enthusiasm and sought to see it through your eyes. It is better that way for yours are younger eyes and mine are tired and weary. I am glad you saw the Greek play acted in the old way—or what is now imagined to have been the old way—in an open-air theatre. I don't remember ever having seen this done though such performances take place sometimes in England. But I have felt the enchantment of these Greek plays even when I have read them. It is extraordinary how these stories of an ancient people, so far removed from us and so different, still grip us and move us strangely. Is this the power of great art alone which transcends time and space, or is it that essentially humanity is the same though its external trappings change?

So you have finished your holiday and are back again in more prosaic Bex. You will remember your visit to Italy and Sicily. Such interludes are pleasant and their memory survives and refreshes.

I returned to Allahabad this morning after a two-day stay at Lucknow. I shall remain here now for ten days and then go to Bombay for a strenuous week....

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

I have given you quite a budget of news about people's comings and goings. The supply is exhausted for I am a bad news-vendor.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

10. To Indira Nehru[1]

Allahabad
7.5.36

Darling Indu,

I have your letter from Bex after your return from your Sicilian tour. You are full of praise for Florence and Taormina. Taormina I do not know but Florence comes up before my eyes with all its sleepy beauty and old-world charm. Even when writing to you my historical letters I succumbed to this charm and my style became less prosaic. Do you remember that passage?[2]...

All my love,

Your loving
Papu

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. See *Glimpses of World History*, (Bombay, 1967), pp. 268-269.

11. To Indira Nehru[1]

Lahore
June 2, 1936

Darling Indu,

I have not been able to survive the six days of my Punjab tour. Four days of it have laid me low and today, the fifth day, I am spending largely in bed. Punjabi popular welcomes are formidable affairs. In my case they have been truly terrific. Both in towns and villages, vast

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

crowds have collected and have overwhelmed me. The programme has been a terribly heavy one, involving long motor journeys. The heat was bad but it was finally the dust that proved too much for me. My throat is all swollen and I can hardly speak without difficulty.

All this great popular affection, though trying enough, is also moving —among a wilderness of excited compliments the most charming and pleasing was one from a young man who objected to much that was said, but added:

तुसी प्यारा है चंगा है ।[2]

Tomorrow night I go back to Allahabad.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

2. You are fine and lovable.

12. To Indira Nehru[1]

In train to Wardha
29.6.36

Darling,

My thoughts go to you today especially and I think of the burden of your examination. It will begin today and you will have your seven hours of it, and again tomorrow and the day after. I remember reading somewhere what a famous professor of the Sorbonne said once during the middle ages. He compared examinations to the sufferings in purgatory and came to the conclusion that the former were far worse. Not knowing much about purgatory I cannot say but I am sure that examinations are a nuisance. All that can be said for them is that they do push us on a little and bring some tension in our minds and thus help in making them sharp and clear. But there is too much of this tension and sometimes this results in blurring and confusing our minds instead of clearing them. Especially so in India, where far too much importance is attached to the passing of examinations and failure is considered a terrible disgrace. As a matter of fact, examinations as they are conducted today are no real test of anything worthwhile. Often those who do

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

well in examinations are failures subsequently in life, and *vice versa.* So it is absurd to take them too seriously or to grow enthusiastic or depressed over them. We try to succeed of course in whatever we put our hands and minds to but we must not lose our sense of proportion.

Anyway your examination troubles will be over, for some time at least, when this letter reaches you and I hope you feel pleasantly relaxed....

I am on my way to Wardha for the Working Committee meeting. I shall be there for two or three days and then I intend going to Bombay for a day for some business—also to see Padmaja after her operation.

Love,

Papu

Wardha 30/6

This letter was too late for the air mail yesterday and so I kept it back. As usual I have had a very tiring and distressing time with all-day debate and argument. My colleagues in the Working Committee are greatly irritated with me as they think that my talking about socialism puts them in a false position. It frightens the rich folk. And so they have almost come to the conclusion that we should part company.[2] This may result in my resigning from the Congress presidentship. I am not sure yet. Anyway I doubt if I can carry on in this way for long. It is a depressing business.

I wrote to you once about Vera Brittain's[3] *Testament of Youth.* I have been reading bits of it here to try to get my mind off politics. I think it is a book you will like, especially as it contains a lot about Somerville. Shall I send it to you?

P.

2. See *Selected Works,* Vol. 7, pp. 309-311.
3. (1893-1970); British author, whose best-known work is her autobiography, *Testament of Youth.*

13. To Indira Nehru[1]

In train to Madras
5/10/36

Darling Indu,
Where are you now, I wonder? What are you doing? Are you having some rest after your examinations? These thoughts come to me as I rush along to the south. I reach Madras soon and later on, after three days, I go further south to Madura and beyond, almost to Cape Comorin, which we visited, mummie and you and I, more than five years ago.[2] This journey makes me feel that I am going further away from you. And so I am, but it is not so much the actual distance that counts but the fact that news of you does not reach me regularly and it is delayed. In Allahabad, I have a sense of nearness to you—letters come more or less regularly—and there are so many things belonging to you which give me a feeling that you are not far. But when I travel away I seem to lose touch with you and I feel a little bit lonelier than I usually do. Lonely in the midst of crowds, vast and friendly crowds, overwhelming one with their affection.

Yesterday I was in Wardha and saw Bapu and then I took the train and at most stations since then, night and day time, there have been crowds. A tiring business. I am a little frightened of the Madras tour for I fear it might almost prove too much for me. Because I have hardly been this way at all, the crowds are all the more eager to see me.

I am being promoted. I came to Wardha from Allahabad in a 3rd class compartment. From Wardha I was asked to travel 2nd and so now I am sitting and writing in lordly fashion. But as we near Madras, I am told that we shall be transferred to a small special train which will take us to Madras. Pomp and circumstance! And then a procession—and then meetings, addresses, parties, and everywhere speeches.

During my tour I shall be taken to Pondicherry also—French India. I am rather looking forward to it. I have never been to any of the French spots in India. It was a little unusual for me to receive telegrams in French from Pondicherry.

I wish Nan had come with me. This would have been a new experience for her.

Keep fit, my dear. The mind functions well only when the body is well.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 532-559.

I have no idea when the air mail goes from Madras. Probably I have just missed it. And then air mails are so irregular now. Imperial Airways have had a bunch of disasters.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

8/10

This letter was too late for the air mail. So I kept it. I am just adding some pictures from the papers here.

Love,

P.

14. To Indira Nehru[1]

Somewhere in Tamil Nad
(my geography is not strong enough
to remember these odd names)
15.10.36

Darling Indu,

For some days I have been attempting to write to you—in vain. I am carried along in a rush from early morning to midnight and it is not easy to write after a twenty-hour stretch of speaking and motoring alternately. The way the people have come to meet us everywhere has been astounding. Yesterday I was within hail of Kanya Kumari and I did so much want to go there. I like the place and especially the feeling that I am on the uttermost tip of India. But it was 60 miles away and that meant 120 miles there and back on an indifferent road. This could not possibly be fitted into my terribly heavy programme.

Today I was at Madura and I made a point of going to the famous temple there. It was a private visit. Hardly anyone was told of it.

1. Written by Jawaharlal *en route* from Madurai to Tiruchchirappalli. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

But, lo and behold, a great crowd surrounded the temple and followed me into its vast corridors. A strange way to see a place with a mass of seething humanity! My ideas of the temple are consequently vague. But the vast size was impressive and sometimes oppressive. The corridors were enormous, and huge statuary, some of which very good. I was taken to the inner sanctum, the holy of holies, the shrine of Meenakshi, an incarnation of Parvati. A great honour. I was struck by the curious way of the Hindu faith which refuses to part with any born within its fold. Here I am accused of irreligion and yet treated as one who is a devout follower. A present of a silk scarf was also given to me—a special gift of the goddess. I realised in this vast temple with its innumerable corridors and inner chambers, faintly lighted up, the great psychological influence of these religious edifices. How they must impress and rather frighten the multitudes and increase the power of the priesthood. That temple put me in mind of the days when the priests were triumphant and ruled over the minds of men, of the great temples of Egypt and Mesopotamia, and, to some extent, of the great cathedrals. There are not many people who can resist this numbing effect.

I have never seen so many roses in my life as here. Everywhere there are enormous garlands of roses, fat heavy things, each containing a thousand to two thousand roses. In the course of the day I might get 200 of such garlands! They are not specially good roses but even so their very number is overwhelming. It seems such a pity to waste them, and what am I to do with these quantities? The car gets filled up and then I distribute them to girls and women and children by the roadside.

Sometimes very artistic decorations are made for our meetings. Festoons of flowers, roses and chrysanthemum, the meeting area shaded with a bamboo network covered with green leaves.

But I must not go on. I am due to be back in Allahabad on the 22nd.

I have had no news of you for ages. No doubt you must have written and your letter is following me about.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

15. To Indira Nehru[1]

Allahabad
1-11-36

Darling Indu,
I have your letter of October 21st. I am sorry that you feel lonely. Of course that feeling comes to all of us and for a time is rather overwhelming. I feel terribly lonely often enough and seek an escape in intensive activity and work. That is a poor way of escape and yet it serves its purpose. For me to feel that way is to be expected for though physically active and fit, I am very old, old not so much in body as in mind and feeling. I have always had that feeling of loneliness but latterly it has grown upon me. But it is all wrong for you to feel this way. For you and the people of your generation there is going to be excitement enough in the days to come. The aeroplanes that hover over you are the reminders of what is coming. The prospect is not a pleasant one but it is not a dull one. What a horror is this Spanish affair. It makes me feel almost sick.

I can quite appreciate your wishing to spend some time in London during the Christmas holidays. You have friends there and cheerful engagements. And yet Miss Baker[2] is probably right in thinking that London will tire you. I think that too long a stay there will necessitate your having to recuperate later, as you had to do last time. And, strangely enough, some days full of excitement in London lead later on to that very feeling of loneliness of which you complain.

Cornwall is not a bad place. I rather like the idea of a stay there but then it is not I who am going but you! Still the point is that you should go where you want to go and do it cheerfully. Switzerland I imagine will be good and you can indulge in winter sports which ought to buck you up. I suppose if you go to Suisse, you would go to Bex for most of the time or on some excursions, etc. Partly you might be with Lu.[3] But wherever you might be try to avoid too much excitement and irregular hours.

I have written to Miss Baker. I have suggested Switzerland to her as an alternative to Cornwall. I have said that personally I like the idea of going to Cornwall but Switzerland with winter sports might

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. Principal of Badminton School, London.
3. Mrs. Louise Geissler; helped Indian students and others in Germany during the pre-Hitlerian period.

appeal to you more. Finally I have suggested to her to find out how you feel in the matter. If she asks you tell her frankly how you feel about it.

Today is Betty's birthday. She and Raja have been in Delhi and are returning here today. Soon they will go back to Bombay.

Writing of birthdays, yours will be here soon. I sent you through Kailash Nath Katju a garland and some odd bags. I want you to get something for this birthday—something you particularly like. I am not referring to the many utilitarian things we carry on with but to those we can well do without. So, for the moment, forget utilitarianism. I enclose a cheque for £ 5 for this. I am afraid you will not have much of a chance of buying anything in Bristol.

I am off to Calcutta tomorrow and from there I go to Orissa and Andhra and C.P.—returning to Allahabad on November 18th.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

16. To Indira Nehru[1]

In train to Calcutta
5.11.36

Darling,

Yesterday I was in Santiniketan and it was peaceful and quiet there. It was vacation time, the Puja holidays were not over, but still there was a considerable colony resident in Santiniketan and Sriniketan. I stayed at Sriniketan as Gurudeva was living there and I had a long, long talk with him about many things. My affection for him grows. I found him a little better than he was when I saw him last in Delhi in March soon after my return from Europe. He was more wide-awake though age steals over him. And yet he still thinks of travelling abroad and visiting China next summer! But I doubt if he will be able to go. Fortunately some big donations have relieved him of financial anxiety for Santiniketan.

We talked of you and he told me what a good influence you had been for others in Santiniketan. And I fell to wondering what influences had shaped you—how good they were or otherwise—and how you were reacting to your present environment. It is eight months since

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

I saw you, my dear, and I wonder how you are growing and changing. Perhaps in another six months' time we might meet again.

There was Krishna Kripalani there and his wife Nandita and Anil Chanda and one or two others whom I recognised and many whom I did not know.

And now I am off to Calcutta.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

17. To Indira Nehru[1]

Dugadda—Garhwal
Nov. 25, 1936

My darling one,

I am sitting in the mountains again, or rather the outer fringe of them. This morning I reached Kotdwar, which, as its name implies, is the gate, the gate of Garhwal. This mountain district of our province is singularly cut off from the outside world. Except to Lansdowne, which is a military centre, there are hardly any roads, and so the outsider seldom comes. I never entered it properly before, although I have skirted the fringe. It is a huge district, 200 miles long, sprawling over the Himalayan foot-hills and mountains.

Dugadda means the two rivers. How uncouth is गड्डा, for river. Compare it to the melodious, flowing नदी, झरना, दरिया! Poor, poverty-stricken areas, with fine human material, as we often find in the mountains. But Garhwal has become famous for the Garhwali regiment which refused to fire in Peshawar during the civil disobedience movement of 1930. Even now two of the Indian officers—Chandra Singh[2] and Narayan Singh[3]—are in prison for that offence.

It is chilly here even at midday. At night it must be very cold. I am here for a few hours only and this evening I return. I would like to go in the interior but I may not. There has been one great disappointment. Did I write to you that I intended going to Badrinath,

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1891); joined Indian army, 1914; remained imprisoned till 1941 after dismissal from service in 1930.
3. Joined Indian army, 1914; was released in 1937.

the famous place of pilgrimage high up in the Himalayas? I was so looking forward to it. I could not of course go on a fortnight's journey over the mountains. But for some time past an air service functions from Hardwar and goes about 2/3rd of the way. I cannot go to Badrinath because of the difficulty of landing there. But I had hoped to be able to fly over Badrinath without alighting there and have a good look at the vast expanses of snow and ice. All this has gone as I found that the service stopped because of the coming of winter. I feel deprived of a pleasure I had been looking forward to so greatly.

I was at Bareilly for three days for the provincial conference.[4] M.N. Roy came there, just discharged after five years of prison, broken in health, his fine straight body rather bent and the signs of age on him. I have sent him to Lucknow to consult doctors. Then he will come to Allahabad and stay with us for a few days early in December. Agatha Harrison is also coming and Charlie Andrews. So we shall have a mixed lot in Anand Bhawan.

The Garhwalis are gathering for the meeting. Many have tramped 50 miles over the mountains. Simple people, I like them. But then I like mountain folk for we have also some mountain blood in our veins. I am going now to the meeting and I shall speak standing under a big precipice—a noble background.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

4. The U.P. Political Conference was held on 22 and 23 November 1936.

18. To Indira Nehru[1]

Allahabad
8/12/36

Darling,

I have been wanting to write to you at some leisure and some length—perilous thought for it results in my waiting for this leisure. Four days ago I was rushed and so I did not write. Today I have been reduced to this, that I have to scribble these lines in the early morning, just before catching the mail to Bombay. It is difficult to develop a mood

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

for writing under these circumstances, and yet my mind has been full of odd ideas and fancies seeking to clothe themselves with ink and appear bravely on the written page. They have no great importance and I suppose they will retire and be for the moment forgotten, cropping up at odd times from some odd corner of my brain.

You must be in London or may be in Switzerland when this letter reaches you. Have a good time and enjoy your holidays and come back refreshed in body and mind. For me Christmas week will be the heaviest of all. For it is practically certain now that I shall be President again of the Congress, and the burden is a heavy one. I feel rather flat and stale already and my capacity for work seems to be less than it was. Even a week's change would put an end to this but I shall have no such week till the end of February.

Agatha has been here—she spent only a day and a half with us but it was good to have some first-hand information and impressions of you. She has gone back to Wardha.

I enclose a snap taken at Sriniketan. Nandita was standing near me.

The train calls me now—I must go away.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

19. To Indira Nehru[1]

Allahabad
14.12.36

Darling,

You must be leaving school for the Christmas holidays. After a period of hard work a holiday is pleasant and I hope you will enjoy it. And through you I shall also have my share of joy. The present is rather a heavy time for me. The Congress is coming and I am again to be its President. The presidential address is the next job for me—a difficult one, for my mind is tired and stale. Ten days in the Himalayas would freshen me but I could not possibly manage them. Within a week we go to Faizpur and so far I have not given even thought to the address. There are so many other things to do, urgent matters which cannot be overlooked. After tomorrow I think I shall lock myself in.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

So you have changed! Of course you have and you should at your age. I find myself growing and changing even at my age. Strangers may not notice such changes for they see the surface only but when there is an emotional bond between two persons even slight moods become apparent. A gesture, a word, a way of looking or speaking betrays the change. So you are not likely to pass unnoticed by me, or rather the change in you. Only the dull and self-centred ones remain more or less static. And we are not dull and too narrow, are we?

Edward Thompson, whose article you sent me, has paid us a rather nice compliment. "You Nehrus", he writes to me, "have been very lucky in many ways, and lucky most of all in your charming and splendid women." He was thinking of mummie perhaps, about whom he had read in my book, and he had recently met Nan. He goes on to say: "Your letters to Indira are an altogether charming record. If she will regard my wife and myself as friends we shall feel honoured; and she will find we are friends".

They live at Oxford. So when you go there you might meet them. They will help you to form your ideas about the English as a race. He writes a very stupid article (the one you sent me) and yet in his own way he is perfectly straight and honest and keen on doing the right thing.

I was amused to read about your reactions to the English. They are a curious people. I must say I like many of their qualities—most of all their restraint. It impresses one. It is an aristocratic quality. But when the aristocrat becomes afraid of losing his special privileges he comes down the scale immediately. And so the English people, fearful now of losing their special position, are losing the good qualities they possessed. Yet some remain. Unhappily, we have always come into touch with the wrong side of them. That was inevitable as our relationship was all wrong.

I suppose the change of kings and all that lay behind it has excited people a lot in England. Yet I must say that everybody behaved rather decently. The human element in the drama was powerful and when kings behave as simple humans, people are gripped by the story. On the whole Edward came out rather well. Not as a very great person, but at any rate as one who refused to behave as an automaton and who could decide for himself in spite of all the pressure that was brought to bear on him. I listened to his farewell speech on the wireless.

All my love.

Your loving
Papu

ON SCIENCE

20. Science and Planning[1]

Most of us unhappily are too much engrossed in the business of politics to pay much attention to the finer and more important aspects of life. That is natural perhaps in a nation which struggles for national freedom and to rid itself of the bonds that prevent normal growth. Like a person in the grip of a disease it can think only of how to gain health again, and this obsession is a barrier to the growth of culture and science. We are entangled in our innumerable problems; we are oppressed by the appalling poverty of our people. But if we had a true standard of values we would realise that the silver jubilee of the Indian Science Congress this year is an event of outstanding importance. For that Congress represents science, and science is the spirit of the age and the dominating factor of the modern world. Even more than the present, the future belongs to science and to those who make friends with science and seek its help for the advancement of humanity.

On this occasion of the silver jubilee, I should like to send my greetings to the Indian Science Congress and to the many distinguished scientists, our own countrymen and our visitors from abroad, who are assembling in Calcutta. He who was chosen to preside over the Congress session had to end his life's journey before he could come here, but that life itself of distinguished service in the cause of science and great achievement has a message for all of us. Though Lord Rutherford[2] is not here, his written word has come to us and, through the courtesy of the editor, I have been able to glance through his presidential address.

Though I have long been a slave driven in the chariot of Indian politics, with little leisure for other thoughts, my mind has often wandered to the days when, as a student, I haunted the laboratories of that home of science, Cambridge. And though circumstances made me part company with science, my thoughts turned to it with longing. In later years,

1. Allahabad, 26 December 1937. *The Hindustan Times*, 8 January 1938. Jawaharlal sent this message on the occasion of the silver jubilee of the Indian Science Congress held at Calcutta on 3-9 January 1938. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 175-177.
2. (1871-1937); professor of physics at Cambridge, 1919-36; was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics in 1908; demonstrated the first artificial splitting of atoms, 1919.

through devious processes, I arrived again at science, when I realised that science was not only a pleasant diversion and abstraction, but was of the very texture of life, without which our modern world would vanish away. Politics led me to economics and this led me inevitably to science and the scientific approach to all our problems and to life itself. It was science alone that could solve these problems of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and illiteracy, of superstition and deadening custom and tradition, of vast resources running to waste, of a rich country inhabited by starving people.

I have read therefore with interest and appreciation Lord Rutherford's remarks on the role of science in national life and the need of training and maintaining research workers.[3] And then I wondered how far all this was possible under our present scheme of things. Something could be done no doubt even now, but how little that is to what might and should be done. Lord Rutherford tells us of the need for national planning. I believe that without such planning little that is worthwhile can be done. But can this be done under present conditions, both political and social? At every step vested interests prevent planning and ordered development and all our energy and enthusiasm is wasted because of this obstruction. Can we plan on a limited scale for limited objectives? We may do so in some measure, but immediately we come up against new problems and our plans go awry. Life is one organic whole and it cannot be separated into watertight compartments. The Mississipi Valley Committee, writing in their Letter of Transmittal to the federal administration of public works, U.S.A., refer to this planning business: "Planning for the use and control of water is planning for most of the basic functions of the life of a nation. We cannot plan for water unless we also reconsider the relevant problems of the land. We cannot plan for water and land unless we plan for the whole people. It is of little use to control rivers unless we also master the conditions which make for the security and freedom of human life".

And so we are driven to think of these basic conditions of human life, of the social system, the economic structure. If science is the dominating factor in modern life, then the social system and economic structure must fit in with science or it is doomed. Only then can we plan effectively and extensively. Lord Rutherford tells us of the need for

3. In his address Lord Rutherford observed: "This is in a sense a scientific age, where there is an ever-increasing recognition throughout the world of the importance of science to national development.... With the growth of responsible government in India, it is to be anticipated that the staff required for the scientific services in India and for industrial research will more and more be drawn from students trained in the Indian universities."

cooperation between the scientist and the industrialist. That need is obvious. So also is the need for cooperation between the scientist and the politician.

I am entirely in favour of a state organisation of research. I would also like the state to send out promising Indian students in large numbers to foreign countries for scientific and technical training. For we have to build India on a scientific foundation, to develop her industries, to change the feudal character of her land system and bring her agriculture in line with modern methods, to develop the social services which she lacks so utterly today, and to do so many other things that shout out to be done. For all this we require trained personnel.

I should like our central and provincial governments to have expert boards to investigate our problems and suggest solutions. A politician dislikes and sometimes suspects the scientist and expert. But without that expert's aid the politician can achieve little.

And so I hope, with Lord Rutherford, "that in the days to come India will again become the home of science, not only as a form of intellectual activity but also as a means of furthering the progress of her people".

21. The Progress of Science[1]

Friends,

You are men of learning and many of you have distinguished records in the realm of science. Yet you have honoured me, an outsider, with an invitation to participate in this annual gathering of yours and I have willingly accepted that invitation. Science and academic halls have not known me for many a long year, and fate and circumstance have led me to the dust and din of the market place and the field and the factory, where men live and toil and suffer. I have become involved in the great human upheavals that have shaken in recent years this land of ours. Yet in spite of the tumult and movement that have surrounded me, I do not come to you wholly as a stranger. For I too have worshipped at the shrine of science and counted myself as one of its votaries.

Who indeed can afford to ignore science today? At every turn we have to seek its aid and the whole fabric of the world today is of its

1. Address at the seventh annual meeting of the National Academy of Sciences held in Allahabad on 5 March 1938. *The Hindu*, 9 March 1938. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 178-183.

making. During the ten thousand years of human civilization, science came in with one vast sweep a century and half ago, and during these 150 years it proved more revolutionary and explosive than anything that had gone before. We who live in this age of science live in an environment and under conditions which are totally different from those of the pre-scientific age. But few realise this in its completeness, and they seek to understand the problems of today by a reference to a yesterday that is dead and gone.

Science had brought all these mighty changes and not all of them have been for the good of humanity. But the most vital and hopeful of the changes that it has brought about has been the development of the scientific outlook in man. It is true that even today vast numbers of people still live mentally in the pre-scientific age, and that most of us, even when we talk glibly of science, betray it in our thought and actions. Even scientists, learned in their particular subjects, often forget to apply the scientific method outside that charmed sphere. And yet it is the scientific method alone that offers hope to mankind and an ending of the agony of the world. This world is racked by fierce conflicts and they are analysed and called by many names. But essentially the major conflict is between the method of science and the methods opposed to science.

In the early days of science there was much talk of a conflict between religion and science, and science was called materialistic and religion spiritual. That conflict hardly seems real today when science has spread out its wings and ventured to make the whole universe its field of action and converted solid matter itself into airy nothing. Yet the conflict was real for it was a conflict between the intellectual tyranny imposed by what was deemed to be religion and the free spirit of man nurtured by the scientific method. Between the two there can be no compromise. For science cannot accept the closing of the windows of the mind, by whatever pleasant name this might be called; it cannot encourage blind faith in someone else's faith. Science therefore must be prepared not only to look up to the heavens and seek to bring them under its control, but also to look down, unafraid, into the pit to hell. To seek to avoid either is not the way of science. The true scientist is the sage unattached to life and the fruits of action, ever seeking truth wheresoever this quest might lead him. To tie himself to a fixed anchorage, from which there is no moving, is to give up that search and to become static in a dynamic world.

Perhaps there is no real conflict between true religion and science but, if so, religion must put on the garb of science and approach all its problems in the spirit of science. A purely secular philosophy of life may

be considered enough by most of us. Why should we trouble ourselves about matters beyond our ken when the problems of the world insistently demand solution? And yet that secular philosophy itself must have some background, some objective, other than merely material well-being. It must essentially have spiritual values and certain standards of behaviour, and, when we consider these, immediately we enter into the realm of what has been called religion.

But science has invaded this realm from many fronts. It has removed the line that was supposed to separate the world of things from the world of thought, matter from mind; it has peeped into the mind and even the unconscious self of man and sought the inner motives that move him, it has even dared to discuss the nature of ultimate reality. The reality of even a particle of matter, we are told, is not its actuality but its potentiality. Matter becomes just a "group agitation" and nature a theatre for such agitations or "for the inter-relations of activities". Everywhere there is motion, change, and the only unit of things real is the "event", which is, and instantaneously is no more. Nothing is, except a happening. If this is the fate of solid matter, what then are the things of the spirit?

How futile the old arguments seem in view of these astonishing developments in scientific thought. It is time we brought up our minds in line with the progress of science and gave up the meaningless controversies of an age gone by. It is true that science changes and there is nothing dogmatic or final about it. But the method of science does not change and it is to that we must adhere in our thought and activities, in research, in social life, in political and economic life, in religion. We may be specks of dust on a soap-bubble universe, but that speck of dust contained something that was the mind and spirit of man. Through the ages this has grown and made itself master of this earth and drawn power from its innermost bowels as well as from the thunderbolt in the skies. It has tried to fathom the secrets of the universe and brought the vagaries of nature itself to its use. More wonderful than the earth and the heavens is this mind and spirit of man which ever grows mightier and seeks fresh world to conquer.

That is the task of the scientist, but we know that all scientists are not fashioned in the heroic mould, nor are they the philosopher-kings of whom Plato told us in the days of old. Kingliness might not be theirs but even philosophising is often lacking, and the day's task follows a narrow sphere and a dull routine. As they specialise, and specialise they must, they lose sight of the larger picture and become pedants out of touch with reality. In India the political conditions under which we have had the misfortune to live have further stunted their growth and

prevented them from playing their rightful part in social progress. Fear has often gripped them as it has gripped so many others in the past, lest by any activity or even thought of theirs they might anger the government of the day and thus endanger their security and position. It is not under these conditions that science flourishes or scientists prosper. Science requires a free environment to grow. When applied to social purposes, it requires a social objective in keeping with its method and the spirit of the age.

That fear complex which oppressed India has happily disappeared to a large extent owing to the activities and movements initiated by our great organization, the National Congress, and even the poor, hungry and miserable peasant has a franker look today and a straighter back. It is time that the shadow of that fear and apprehension vanished from our academic halls also.

We have vast problems to face and to solve. They will not be solved by the politicians alone, for they may not have the vision or the expert knowledge; they will not be solved by the scientists alone, for they will not have the power to do so or the larger outlook which takes everything into its ken. They can and will be solved by the cooperation of the two for a well-defined and definite social objective.

That objective is necessary for without it our efforts are vain and trivial and lack coordination. We have seen in Soviet Russia how a consciously held objective, backed by coordinated effort, can change a backward country into an advanced industrial state with an ever-rising standard of living. Some such method we shall have to pursue if we are to make rapid progress.

The greatest of our problems is that of the land, but intimately connected with it is that of industry. And side by side with these go the social services. All of these will have to be tackled together and coordinated together. That is a vast undertaking but it will have to be shouldered.

Soon after the formation of the Congress ministries in August last, the Working Committee of the Congress passed a resolution which should interest scientists and experts. I should like therefore to draw your attention to it. It ran thus:

> The Working Committee recommends to the Congress ministries the appointment of a committee of experts to consider urgent and vital problems, the solution of which is necessary to any scheme of national reconstruction and social planning. Such solution will require extensive surveys and the collection of data, as well as a clearly defined social objective. Many of these problems cannot be dealt

> with effectively on a provincial basis and the interests of adjoining provinces are inter-linked. Comprehensive river surveys are necessary for the formulation of a policy to prevent disastrous floods, to utilize the water for purposes of irrigation, to consider the problem of soil erosion, to eradicate malaria, and for the development of hydro-electric and other schemes. For this purpose the whole river valleys will have to be surveyed and investigated and large-scale state planning resorted to. The development and control of industries require also joint and coordinated action on the part of several provinces. The Working Committee advises, therefore, that, to begin with, an inter-provincial committee of experts be appointed to consider the general nature of the problems to be faced, and to suggest how, and in what order, these should be tackled. The expert committee may suggest the formation of special committees or boards to consider each such problem separately and to advise the provincial governments concerned as to the joint action to be undertaken.

Something has been done in this respect, a power alcohol and other committees have been appointed, but I wish more had been done. I should like an aggressive and widespread tackling of our problems by experts. I should like museums and permanent exhibitions for the education of our masses, especially the peasantry, to grow up in every district. I remember the wonderful peasant museums I saw in the U.S.S.R. and compare them with the pitiful agricultural exhibitions that are organised here from time to time. I remember also vividly that splendid and astonishing museum, the Deutsches Museum at Munich, and wonder rather wistfully when some such thing will grow up in India.

It is for this Academy of Sciences to take a lead in all such matters and to advise the government thereon. The government should cooperate with them and help them and take full advantage of their expert knowledge. But the academy must not just wait for the government to give it a push every time. We have got too much into the habit of waiting for government to take the initiative in everything. It is the business of the government to take the initiative, but it is also the business of the scientists to take the initiative themselves. We cannot wait for each other. We must get a move on.

And so, having taken up so much of your time, I commend you to your labours, and hope that you will have the privilege of serving India and of helping in the progress and advancement of her people.

TO THE STUDENTS

22. On the Kanpur Students' Strike[1]

I have been distressed to learn of the recent developments in the D.A.V. College in Cawnpore resulting in a strike of the students of the college. It appears that a large number of students took part in the polling day arrangements for the assembly election in rural areas and this was disapproved by the college authorities. This was done not only in Cawnpore but in various parts of India, and I am partly responsible for this as I, in common with some of my colleagues, appealed to the students and others to help us. It seemed to me that it was a well-recognised right and privilege of students to participate in elections in this manner. In other countries they do so; even in India, with its authoritarian atmosphere, they have done so. Senior students are often themselves voters and it is right that they should take interest in this working of the constitutional apparatus of the government. From the point of view of their education even and their preparation for life, it is desirable that they should be encouraged to do so. It is true that abnormal conditions prevail in India and, situated as we are, there is bound to be continuous conflict between our nationalism and will to freedom and the government which is based on authoritarianism. This inevitably introduces complications. But this conflict and these complications do not and should not limit this elementary right of the student world. The students stand on the threshold of life and they must walk across that threshold occasionally to see and understand life as it is. Only then will they be able to live it worthily and play an effective part in it. Thus in India, where all of us await eagerly the change from the dismal present to a brighter and freer future, it is all the more necessary for students to prepare themselves for this future by understanding the present and taking some part in its manifold activities. Else they will be out of joint, unhappy misfits in a changing world. I am convinced therefore that we were right in asking the students to join in some of the election activities and they were right in responding to that call. Ordinarily the matter would have ended there as it has so ended everywhere else in India, including the other colleges in Cawnpore.

1. Allahabad, 21 February 1937. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

But unhappily in the D.A.V. College there was friction and the students were told, or thought, that they would be victimised for their behaviour. This excited some of them and it is stated that some cries derogatory to the principal were raised and some petty damage to window panes, etc., was done. The students as a body deny these cries but it is quite possible that a few among them were responsible for them.

It is regrettable that any student should have used unseemly language or indulged in unruly and rough behaviour. Such behaviour injures the cause of the students as it diverts attention from the principle involved to other matters.

It seems to me that a small matter has assumed needless importance and the sooner this conflict between the college authorities and the students is ended the better for all concerned. Discipline must exist in any establishment or organisation, much more so among the students. All life is largely a matter of discipline. But this discipline, in order to be of value, must be largely self-discipline. Imposed discipline often defeats its purpose.

I feel that the right of students to take part in orderly and constitutional politics must be recognised and to penalise such activity would be a grave wrong. In the present case, in view of the unruly behaviour of some students, it is right and proper that the students should express their regret to the principal for this.

I am sure that the principal has no desire to penalise his students and thus lay the foundations of discord. He must want harmony and the spirit of cooperation. I trust he will assure them that there will be no victimisation and the students will end their strike.

23. To P. S. Singh[1]

Allahabad
April 18, 1937

Dear Comrade,[2]
I have your letter of April 9th. I am glad to learn that the Indian students in Great Britain and Ireland have started a federation. I have read with interest the message that Mr. George Bernard Shaw has sent you. I think he is perfectly right in laying stress on the desirability of

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Editor, *The Indian Student*, a journal published from London.

Indian students developing contacts with non-Indians and of trying to understand the spirit of European culture. That indeed should be the objective of every Indian who goes abroad to Europe, for only thus can he widen his own horizon and understand to some extent the modern world, and thus make himself fit for the future service of the Indian people and of humanity.

But this emphasis, right as it is, does not in any way lessen the desirability of Indians who go abroad meeting each other, cooperating with each other, and acting together whenever such joint action is called for. Indeed Mr. Bernard Shaw himself approves of your aims which necessitate joint action. This joint action can only come if you have an organisation which brings Indian students together to discuss among themselves their common problems. These problems are the problems of Indian students abroad; even more so they are the problems of India and the world. If Indian students do not give thought to these larger problems during their studies abroad, they do not learn much, and they return to their mother country with vacant minds, or minds which are full of useless lumber, for which there is no demand in this country.

I welcome therefore the attempt to organise Indian students abroad. I do not know anything about this organisation and how it is likely to shape itself. The time for congratulations will come later when you have justified yourselves by your good work.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

24. The Republic of Youth[1]

I send my greetings to the World Students' Association which is having its international conference soon in Paris.[2] The present generation has had to face great problems and conflicts, and all over the world rival forces fight for mastery. Many have laboured for a happier and more worthwhile order which will solve these problems and put an end to these conflicts. When that order comes we cannot say, but meanwhile we carry the heavy burden of today and think of the catastrophes that

1. Allahabad, 2 August 1937. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. This conference, held in October 1937, was devoted to the freedom of colonial peoples and the preservation of peace in the world.

threaten to overwhelm us. The students, representing the coming generation, are yet, to some extent, free from this burden, but even now they cannot wholly avoid it and all too soon their time will also come. I hope they will shoulder it worthily and bring the enthusiasm and broad-mindedness of youth to the solution of our problems. They must avoid the narrow creeds that separate and keep us in the old ruts, and seek the broad path of mutual cooperation for human betterment. The student world is astir with these ideas, in the East and West, and therein lies the hope of the future. I welcome, therefore, this international conference which brings students from all over the world and develops contacts between the youth of different countries. For students are essentially members of the republic of youth which ignores narrow boundaries and racial and other barriers, and thinks of the world as its theatre of action for the common good. I wish the conference all success.

25. Students and National Service[1]

We have already lived a major part of our life. After some time we shall go away leaving the burden to be shouldered by you. It is a troublesome world but you have to live here. How will you face it?

I desire to peep behind the curtain of the future and see what sort of men would carry on the struggle, for men are instruments of history. It all depends on the human material and the qualities of head and heart that the people possess. That is what I am looking for among the new generation. It has been said in the past about Indians that they can make a great deal of noise but lack perseverance and constancy. The charge is not wholly unfounded. But within the last few years great changes have taken place in India. These changes have been for the good.

Difficult times are ahead and we must understand that no country can make progress without making some sacrifice. A country's history is made when it comes out successful through its trials. A great deal of emphasis has been laid in India on administration, so much so that what is administered has itself been lost sight of. We have got accustomed to this unsatisfactory state of affairs as a matter of habit. Things are very bad in India compared to foreign countries. India appears like a dilapidated country.

1. Reply to a welcome address presented by the students of Kayastha Pathashala, Allahabad, 30 August 1937. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 31 August 1937.

WITH SUBHAS BOSE, 1938

WITH MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE ON BOARD THE S.S. "EL MADINA". 2 JANUARY 1938

In England only stupid boys think of entering the services and taking up jobs. I would advise the students to choose the path of national service and sacrifice and not hanker after the I.C.S. or the P.C.S. You should put your enthusiasm to proper use. You should aim high and work indefatigably for your ideals. Although reading of history shows that man is the most stupid being and that thought has often depressed me, still the history of the evolution of man with that tiny grey matter and his conquest of nature are wonderful achievements and inspire me with hope for the future. Man has never admitted defeat.

26. Law and Society[1]

Students generally study law in order to join the legal profession to earn their living, but I want them to think of the other phases of life also. When two countries are involved in a conflict then the principle that operates in the making of laws is: 'might is right', and not what the subject people would like to have. A law enacted without the people's willingness and support behind it can enjoy little respect.

If we look at the struggle between Japan and China, we shall see that it is the beginning of a big fight. Formerly, as in 1914, the breaking out of a war was preceded by a formal declaration to enable the belligerent nations to withdraw their ambassadors from the enemy's territory. But now a war begins suddenly with bomb-throwing, and legally one cannot call it a war, as a declaration is not made according to international law, although thousands lose their lives.

What I wish to emphasize is that law is certainly a desirable thing, for without it society cannot go on. But laws should also be changed to suit the changing conditions. At present, everything in the world is undergoing a change. It therefore makes no sense if we say that old laws would continue. Precedent is the basis of English law. Precedents are followed in arriving at decisions while the fact that conditions have changed and the precedents would not apply to the conditions prevailing now is not taken into consideration.

So far as social laws are concerned, religious beliefs and customs which have the force of law give them the necessary sanction. People entertain a sort of fear in introducing a change or reform in the old customs.

1. Address to the Allahabad University Law Society, 1 September 1937. From *The Leader*, 4 September 1937.

As regards administrative laws, they are made by the party in power and the party in power makes such laws as would make its interests secure. Propaganda is done everywhere for creating an atmosphere in favour of those administrative laws. Education is a great means for doing such a propaganda. In the present age, radio and cinema are also being utilised for the purpose.

Hindu law is based on customs. Customs change and with that the laws also change. However, with the advent of the British raj those customs were codified[2] with the result that the dynamic character of the Hindu customs was suppressed. If there had been no statute law customs could have changed with the change in times. The Hindu customs, which were codified, do not represent progressive views, but they represent the views of the reactionaries with whose advice they were codified. The result is that radical changes are needed in the Hindu law because there are many things of which Hindu society is tired but it is bound by the statute.

The society's bond with the old customs and laws is like a growing child whose coat has to be changed as he grows. Otherwise, the same coat would cause him considerable inconvenience and ultimately it would be torn for it would not fit him. Similarly if laws that governed a society are not changed when the society developed and progressed, a time would come when it would be impossible for it to continue in its old dress, and an attempt consequently would be made to tear it, a process which is called revolution. Therefore, if you want to have good laws then the laws should be such as would suit the prevailing conditions and should be changed when the conditions do not remain the same. The time has now come when it is impossible for the society to continue to wear the old coat and that is the reason why you notice revolutionary tendencies in the society.

Behind every law there is some power. It is the power of public opinion and if public opinion goes against any law, it becomes impossible for it to have any force. Looking at the conditions as they prevail now in the world and in our country, it seems that the present laws have outlived their utility. Ours is a country on the march and if there be no obstacles, India cannot only equal other advanced countries of the world but can go ahead of them.

I very much wish the students of law to think over the questions raised by me today, for unless the students of law appreciate that the laws

2. A code of Hindu law was prepared in 1775 during the time of Warren Hastings; it codified customs relating to inheritance, marriage, caste and other religious usages and institutions of the Hindus.

should change with the changes overtaking the society, they would not be able to help in the framing of the right type of laws. If, on the other hand, they believed that the old laws should continue then they would not prove themselves to be useful citizens and the country would also not be benefited by them.

27. Students and Discipline[1]

My way of addressing a large gathering is to talk to them. I want you to understand the nature of even the most difficult problems before you and form your opinion about them. I do not like the blind carrying out of the orders of great leaders, however eminent they may be. Though the leaders' ability does matter, still I would say that an opinion formed by the mass of the general public carries more weight and influence than the opinion of a leader. Strength comes to you not from a public leader but from yourselves. It is, of course, our good fortune that we had a succession of distinguished leaders in our country. During the last 20 years or so, that we have been fighting against the government, many of our comrades have passed away. We feel their loss. So would the leaders of today also pass away, one by one, but the battle of freedom that we are waging would continue till the goal is achieved.

I am a political worker and I am greatly interested in that work. I am very pleased to see the new spirit that came over the Indian masses during the last two months. It looked as though the nation had taken a different turn. New hopes are visible on the faces of even the poorest farmers in the country. There is no doubt that all this is due to the Congress ministries coming into power. But that does not mean that we have obtained Swaraj. The same old British Government still rules over us. The Congress ministers have somehow been allowed to find a place for themselves in the governmental apparatus. They are very much handicapped in their work because not only have they to work with the same old civilians who are placed under them but have also to reckon with the extraordinary powers vested in the Governors. It is true that even under the existing conditions they have opportunities to increase their strength. I also do not wish to ignore the potentialities for doing good which the Congress ministries have acquired

1. Speech at Kanpur, 28 September 1937. From *The Leader*, 1 October 1937.

after coming into power. Danger however lies in the fact that this small strength which they have acquired might make them so complacent that they may stop working for their real object. But it is also good that under the Congress ministries we have now got an opportunity to conserve our strength and increase it further. But we should not become over-jubilant on seeing the Congress in power because who knows on what issue the ministers may have to resign. For years we had only one type of work to do and that was to fight. But we have now turned our attention to this work of a different type.

I also want to refer to the regrettable change that has come over the students. The recent student outrages in several parts of the province must be condemned by all. Students get unusually excited on trifling issues. Of course, the students have the right to oppose injustice but they have no business to indulge in acts of indecency and outrage. The methods followed by them are of the fascist variety. These methods have found approval in Germany and Italy. If the students followed these methods they would soon acquire a bad name. They should, therefore, realize that they are following a wrong path and should give it up.

We have gathered here today to express our sympathies for the Chinese who are at present involved in a serious struggle. It may seem curious that those who are slaves should sympathize with the Chinese who are free and are fighting to preserve their freedom. We do so because we are interested in the Chinese struggle and wish to see all down-trodden people, wherever they may be, become free. The Sino-Japanese fight is in many respects extraordinary. It was started without a regular declaration of war. It has been very fierce in its nature and there is every likelihood of the war assuming the proportions of a world conflagration. There is every possibility of both China and Japan being destroyed. It is true that the Chinese are less powerful than the Japanese but the Chinese are not so weak now and the Japanese cannot easily overpower them. The Japanese, finding a closer *rapprochement* growing between the Chinese and the Russians and believing that the Russians are getting involved in their domestic troubles, attacked the Chinese without any provocation. The only fault of the Chinese is that they are trying to grow strong. I condemn the policy of sending Indian troops to fight abroad for imperialistic purposes. In future, we should not agree to the employment of Indian troops for such purposes. Safeguarding of the Indian interests has been given as the ostensible reason for the despatch of Indian troops to China. It has, however, failed to convince anyone.

28. Commitment and Creativity[1]

I am glad to see that you have a students' union in your university. I however want to ask you whether you have formed any study circles devoted to the consideration of important problems. We are living in times of dynamic changes, and soon enough you will have to shoulder grave responsibilities. Are you prepared to shoulder those responsibilities? At Oxford and Cambridge there are numerous clubs for the discussion of important questions. You should also start such clubs. You cannot remain in academic seclusion.

During the last twenty years, India has raised herself considerably from her depressed and weak condition. We do not know what lies in store for us during the next ten years. May be, there will be no British Empire on the map of the world—not because India is waging a fight against it but because the world today is at the end of an epoch of capitalism, and many new forces are emerging to fight imperialism.

I want the students and teachers to think about big issues for thus alone can big problems be solved. I want such organisation of the students to be developed as would pose a challenge to the empires of the world. I do not want you to behave like a frenzied crowd.

You people live comparatively in an atmosphere of freedom and have fewer cares and anxieties. You are, therefore, in a better position to take a dispassionate view of things. You have the time and opportunity to train your minds. At the same time you have also to shoulder the bigger responsibility of training others who are not so fortunate as to receive university education.

India is, at present, pulsating with a new life. If you develop the right outlook, then you will be prepared to undertake the responsibility of shaping India's future. You must develop an individuality if you want to perform great deeds. India can become a great country if its people develop a spirit that befits great men. It is not by shouting or raising big cries but by the accomplishment of great deeds by its people that our country shall be reckoned as one of the great nations. I have often wondered if behind all this shouting there is any real energy and force. I want to know how many of you are thinking of big issues and have great ambitions? Search for jobs and security of life cannot be called an ambition.

1. Address to the students of Lucknow University, 17 November 1937. From *The Leader*, 20 November 1937.

We lack a spirit of cooperation among us. The greatest service that the Congress has done has been to inculcate a spirit of cooperation among the people. Cooperation has been the hallmark of Western civilization.

The situation in the world is becoming so complex that no one can say what would happen in the next ten or fifteen years. A great catastrophe faces the world and I think a new world is likely to emerge out of the present crisis. Though our country has become strong as a result of the great awakening brought about among the people by the nationalist movement, still we continue to suffer greatly because we have not rid ourselves of the slavish mentality, and the gap between our profession and practice remains as big as before. It is difficult to fight these evils. But before we try to fight them, we must think clearly what we want to change. No action taken without proper thought ever produces right results.

I am happy to note that the people are slowly giving up the fatalist mentality. The larger the number of people who challenge the planets rather than feel over-awed by them, the better it would be for the country. I would prefer to command nature and conquer it than be its slave. I hate being a weakling.

The relationship between the teacher and the taught is different from that which exists between the employer and the employee. Strikes, therefore, really do not fit in with the life of the students. I would not therefore approve the idea of students going on strikes on flimsy grounds during normal times. We cannot, however, lay down any rules for the revolutionary period. I would like the students to behave in a dignified and disciplined manner. I cannot appreciate the idea of students shouting slogans and parading in the streets like excited mobs.

It is a sad thing to see the spirit of communalism grow, of all places, in the temples of learning. I do not get excited when the communal question crops up because it is mainly raised by a few upper-class city-dwellers, although I know they can sometimes make a nuisance of themselves. Nobody however raises this question in rural areas as it is not after all a question affecting the whole mass of the people in the country. Obsession with this question shows the mental backwardness of the people who raise it. It prevents clear and unbiased thinking. The recent incident[2] which took place in Aligarh University shows the same obsession from which some students seem to be suffering. I hope it is only a momentary aberration. I expect cultured men not to

2. See p. 196.

be swept off their feet by the propaganda carried on by the communal elements in our society.

29. On the Allahabad Students' Strike[1]

I am primarily interested in fundamental matters and am anxious to find out how our young men can be prepared for the service of the country. We can expect bright people only to come out from our colleges and universities. During the noncooperation days it was said that schools and colleges were *ghulam khane*[2] and it was for that reason that a boycott of the educational institutions was started. The Indian colleges and universities have already earned a bad name. The system of education in the country is also bad and ought to be changed. A complete change in the system throughout the country is not an easy task though the Congress ministries may take some steps in that direction. Those who are students today will soon be called upon to carry the burden of the administration of the country. They should, therefore, acquire such a high standard of efficiency as would earn them the respect and admiration of all. The students should try to develop their mental faculties and should aim high. They should not hanker after jobs.

Therefore I am not much impressed by the students resorting to strikes on petty issues. There is something at the present moment which has caused a sort of stir among the labourers, the kisans and others. I noticed at Cawnpore that the labourers were leading a new life. But we should remember that when one gets strength and new life there is a danger of that new energy and power being misused. The Cawnpore labourers have shown improvement in their organisational abilities. I am simply surprised to notice the military precision with which they organized picketing in connection with the strikes. But there is the danger of this new power being frittered away and misused.

So far as the students are concerned they should show greater restraint in their conduct because they are educated and are therefore expected

1. Speech at a meeting organised by the Allahabad Students Association on 20 November 1937. From *The Leader*, 22 November 1937. Restrictions placed by the authorities in regard to flag-hoisting and participation of students in the election campaign led to widespread strikes in colleges and schools in the U.P. Despite Jawaharlal's advice, the students of Allahabad continued the strike.
2. Homes for the slaves.

to be cultured and well behaved. But I see less restraint among them. The question of fees, in my view, is not so serious as to necessitate strikes. The fees charged differ from one institution to another. In some institutions they might be somewhat high but I cannot appreciate the students resorting to strikes on that account. I cannot understand at all the reason for a strike on the question of fees. The party which should protest and represent against fees should be the parents but it is strange that while the parents could bear the payment of the fees, the students are becoming *khudai faujdars*[3] and questioning the propriety of the fees. I appreciate that students should be full of enthusiasm but on the issue of fees it was not proper for them to have gone on strike. In my view, if the students carried on, by constitutional methods, a concerted agitation against the fees, which they consider to be unjust, their demands would be conceded.

The relationship between the employer and the labourer, and the zamindar and the tenant, is of the exploiter and the exploited. Hence the struggle between them is bound to continue; but the relationship between the teacher and the taught is not that of the exploiter and the exploited. Both are engaged in the same task, though due to the prevalence of a system of foreign administration the students think that they are being suppressed.

I am emphatically of the opinion that they should not waste their growing strength by resorting to strikes indiscriminately though I do not say that there should be no strikes. As regards the Ewing Christian College question, I feel that they had put Dr. Ahmad in a very embarrassing position because he could not even express his opinion freely on the subject due to his own involvement in the matter raised by the students.[4] I realize that certain actions of the college authorities have aroused resentment but I would advise the students to consider the situation coolly and try to find an honourable solution for ending the strike as soon as possible. I hope the notion of false prestige would not be allowed to mar the prospects of success for arriving at an honourable settlement.

I am surprised at the way in which my speeches at Lucknow and Cawnpore have been reported. They seem to have given an impression that I called the students *bhatiaras*. I have not been properly reported. What I had said was that the students' meetings should not be like the *majlis of bhatiaras*.[5] Incidents such as had taken place at Plaza at

3. Self-appointed guardians.
4. Z.A. Ahmad had been invited by the students for the flag-hoisting ceremony but the college authorities did not permit it.
5. A meeting of the uncivilised.

Lucknow and at Christ Church College at Cawnpore bring the students into disrepute only.

30. The Duty of Indian Students in Britain[1]

I send my greetings to the federation of the Indian Students Societies in Great Britain on the occasion of their second annual conference. Many Indian students go to foreign countries for their studies. Of these the largest number go to Great Britain and therefore it is important that the Indian students in Great Britain should organise themselves and hold together, and prepare themselves not only individually but also collectively for the work ahead of them in India. That work is going to be of the most exacting kind requiring clear thought and vision, training, efficiency and perseverance. It is not good enough for us to push along in the old ruts.

Indeed, these old ruts are visibly disappearing before our eyes, not only in India but elsewhere also. Vast and intricate problems face us everywhere and the burden of solving them will inevitably lie on the shoulders of the younger generation. How far are the Indian students abroad preparing themselves for shouldering this burden and for answering the questions that the modern world puts to them? It is not good enough to repeat catchwords and time-worn phrases in answer to these questions. We have to go deeper if we are to understand the complexities of the situation today in India and the world.

We have to develop something of steel in us which will not bend even under the stress of adverse circumstances. We have to prepare ourselves to face unflinchingly any situation and any crisis that might come our way. In this world full of crises and impending catastrophe, it is the men and women of clear vision, trained minds and strong wills, devoted to the cause of freedom and betterment of humanity, who will mould history. India needs such men and women. How many of her people abroad will rise to the occasion, the future will show. I hope that the conference of the Indian students in Great Britain will help in placing these ideals before our countrymen abroad and in organising them for work in this behalf.

1. Khali, 23 March 1938. *The Bombay Chronicle,* 19 April 1938. This message was sent to Feroze Gandhi, the organizing secretary.

31. Message to the Canadian Youth Congress[1]

I send my greetings to the delegates of the Canadian Youth Congress. They will discuss their common problems but they will realise that their problems are a part of the wider problems of the world. A true solution of national problems must be founded on a solution of international problems. It is right that youth, which is not hidebound and tied down to the ancient ruts, should consider the problems that encompass us and try to find ways of solving them. We have to face today an aggressive and brutal fascism and those who have grown up in a democratic tradition are repelled by it. But democracy is not merely anti-fascist. It must necessarily be anti-imperialist. It must base itself on the freedom of all peoples and countries. Only then can we have security and progress in this world and cooperation for the common good. I have no doubt that the young men and women of Canada will stand by this ideal of peace and freedom all over the world. I wish them all success in their deliberations.

1. Allahabad, 30 April 1938. A.I.C.C. File No. F.D.10/1936, pp. 209-210, N.M.M.L. The third Canadian Youth Congress was held in Toronto in May 1938.

THE QUESTION OF LANGUAGE

32. On the Hindi-Urdu Controversy[1]

Lately the Hindi-Urdu controversy has risen again and the people suspect that the protagonists of each are suppressing those in favour of the other. Without thinking over the problem, spirited articles are written as it is considered that the more one attacks another the more one benefits one's own language. But a little reflection would show the utter

1. Message to the Madras Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. *Aaj*, 6 July 1937. Original in Hindi.

futility of this. The literature in any language does not progress in this manner.

It is also found that we often attach very different meanings to literature. We get greatly involved in minor matters with regard to a language and forget the basic issues. For whom is a literature meant? Is it for a few educated people or for the common man? Until we answer this question we shall be unable to discuss clearly the future trend of a literature. If we realise this, then probably our other disputes also, including the Hindi-Urdu controversy, might be resolved.

The first thing to bear in mind is that our literature at present is very backward. Compared to any European language ours is quite inferior. The new books that are being published in our country are not of a high standard; so to understand the present-day world it becomes necessary to read books in foreign languages. New ideas are reflected very little in our literature. There are very few good books on history, politics, economics, science and other subjects in our languages. We have to pay full attention to this problem, otherwise our languages cannot develop and those who are keen to learn these subjects will be compelled to go elsewhere.

A number of questions arise. I cannot deal with all of them here. But I want to draw your attention to certain points.

I fully believe that rivalry between Hindi and Urdu is harmful to both. They can progress only by cooperation, and if one progresses the other will also gain. Therefore their mutual relationship should be not of rivalry even if they have to go different ways occasionally. One should be pleased to see the other progress for it would then result in one's own progress. When in Europe the new literatures (English, French, German, Italian) progressed, all of them did so together and not by competition or by suppressing each other.

This does not mean that the lovers of a particular language should not make a separate effort for the advancement of their own language. They must do so; but such effort should not be directed against any other language and should always bear in mind the basic principles.

Not only with regard to Hindi and Urdu but with regard to all our major languages—Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam—we should make it clear that we want the progress of all of them and not any rivalry among them. In each province the language of that province is supreme. Hindi or Hindustani is certainly the national language and it ought to be. But it can come only after the provincial language. If this is decided upon much misunderstanding can be removed and the relationship among the different languages can also improve.

Although Hindi and Urdu are very close to each other, they are somewhat drifting apart, thereby causing harm to both. There are two heads on one body; yet both keep quarrelling. We have to understand two things which are apparently contradictory. Firstly, we should write and speak such language in Hindi or Urdu as is a middle language, not containing many difficult words from Sanskrit or Persian or Arabic. This language is generally called Hindustani. It is said, and rightly, that if such language is written the drawbacks of both sides creep in and a hybrid language is created which has neither beauty nor force. Although this is correct, it is not so important. I think that by a combination of Hindi and Urdu we can in course of time evolve a very beautiful and potent language which will have the vigour of youth and rank high among the languages of the world.

Despite this we have to remember that languages are not evolved or do not progress by compulsion. A literature blooms like a flower; if force be applied, it withers. Therefore if Hindi and Urdu drift apart temporarily we should not worry. We should try to learn both languages, because the larger our vocabulary the better it would be.

As for the script, it should be made quite clear that both the Hindi and Urdu scripts should co-exist and that everyone should be free to write in either. It is often said that the Hindi script is suppressed in one province, say, the Frontier Province, and that in another province the Urdu script is not given enough scope. We should not express the viewpoint of one side alone; rather we should propound the principle that both scripts be allowed full freedom everywhere. The lovers of Hindi and Urdu should come to an agreement and work for it.

This question, in fact, goes even beyond Hindi and Urdu. In my opinion, every language and every script should have full freedom provided a sufficient number of people speak that language or write in that script. For example, if in Calcutta there are a considerable number of Tamil-speaking people, they should have the right to have Tamil as the medium of instruction in their schools. It is obvious that political or other such work in a province cannot be done in a number of languages. It can be done only in the language of that province. In northern and central India, where Hindustani is the language of the common man, one language and two scripts should be used freely. It does not mean that everyone will have to learn both the scripts. It will be too great a burden on children. Therefore they, or their parents, should decide which script they should learn. But an effort should be made to make some people learn both the scripts.

There has been much controversy in regard to the words Hindi and Hindustani, and this has created misunderstanding. It is an unnecessary

controversy. Both the words can be used for our national language. Both are beautiful and related to our country and people. But it would be better if in order to end this controversy we call the spoken language as Hindustani and the script as Hindi or Urdu. Then one will clearly understand what we say.

What should be the form of this Hindustani language? The people of Delhi or Lucknow say that their dialect is intelligible to all and so it should be treated as Hindustani. But if you go to Banaras, Patna, central India or Rajputana, you will find a lot of difference. And if you go from a city to a village you will find still greater difference. What language then should be ours?

Our language should be a cultured language and understood by the maximum number of people. We cannot evolve such a language by sitting together and comparing certain shortcomings, nor can a few scholars of Hindi and Urdu do it jointly. A strong foundation for our language will be laid only when the writers write and the speakers speak for the common man. Then all this academic discussion as regards the proportion of Urdu and Hindi words will come to an end. The common man will make the decision. Whatever is intelligible to him will remain and the rest will gradually disappear.

Therefore the basic issue before us is that we should build up our literature for the common man. When we write, we should have him in our mind. Every writer has to ask himself, "For whom do I write?"

One thing more. It is essential that the famous books of Europe be translated into Hindi. Only thus will we be able to bring here the ideas prevalent in the world and derive advantage from foreign literatures.

33. The Question of Language[1]

We have had during recent months a revival of the old controversy between Hindi and Urdu, and high excitement has accompanied it and charges and counter-charges have been flung about. A subject eminently suited for calm and scholarly consideration and academic debate has been dragged down to the level of the market-place, and communal passions have centred round it. Inevitably, many of the champions who have

1. Allahabad, 25 July 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 11-13 August 1937. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 241-261. It was also published by the A.I.C.C. as a pamphlet.

entered the field of battle have little to do with scholarship or the love of a language for its own sake; they have been chiefly concerned with the government orders and court procedure. Those who love language as the embodiment of culture, of airy thought caught in the network of words and phrases, of ideas crystallized, of fine shades of meaning, of the music and rhythm that accompany it, of the fascinating history and associations of its words, of the picture of life in all its phases, those to whom a language is dear because of all this and more, wondered at this vulgar argument and kept away from it.

And yet we cannot keep away from it or ignore it, for the question of language is an important one for us. It is not important because of that cry of the ignorant that India is a babel of tongues with hundreds and hundreds of languages. India, as everyone who looks round him can see, has singularly few languages considering its vast size, and these are intimately allied to each other. India has also one dominant and widespread language which, with its variations, covers a vast area and numbers its votaries by the hundred million. Yet the problem remains and has to be faced.

It has to be faced for the moment because of its communal and political implications. But that is a temporary matter and will pass. The real problem will remain: as to what policy we shall adopt in a scheme of general mass education and the cultural development of the people; how shall we promote the unity of India and yet preserve the rich diversity of our inheritance?

The question of language is ever one of great consequence for a people. Almost exactly three hundred years ago Milton, writing from Florence to a friend, emphasized this and said: "Nor is it to be considered of small consequence what language, pure or corrupt, a people has, or what is their customary degree of propriety in speaking it...for let the words of a country be in part unhandsome and offensive in themselves, in part debased by wear and wrongly uttered, and what do they declare, but by no light indication, that the inhabitants of that country are an indolent, idly yawning race, with minds already long prepared for any amount of servility? On the other hand, we have never heard that any empire, any state, did not at least flourish in a middling degree as long as its own liking and care for its language lasted."

A living language is a throbbing, vital thing, ever changing, ever growing and mirroring the people who speak and write it. It has its roots in the masses, though its superstructure may represent the culture of a few. How, then, can we change it or shape it to our liking by resolutions or orders from above? And yet I find this widely prevalent notion that we can force a language to behave in a particular manner if we

only will it so. It is true that under modern conditions, with mass education and mass propaganda through the press, printed books, cinema, and the radio, a language can be varied much more rapidly than in past times. And yet that variation is but the mirror of the rapid changes taking place among the people who use it. If a language loses touch with the people, it loses its vitality and becomes an artificial, lifeless thing instead of the thing of life and strength and joy that it should be. Attempts to force the growth of a language in a particular direction are likely to end in distorting it and crushing its spirit.

What should be the policy of the state in regard to language? The Congress has briefly but clearly and definitely stated this in the resolution on fundamental rights: "The culture, language and script of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas shall be protected." By this declaration the Congress is bound, and no minority or linguistic group can require a wider assurance. Further, the Congress has stated in its constitution, as well as in many resolutions, that, while the common language of the country should be Hindustani, the provincial languages should be dominant in their respective areas. A language cannot be imposed by resolution, and the Congress desires to develop a common language and carry on most of our work in the provincial languages would be pious wishes, ignored by the multitude, if they did not fit in with existing conditions and the needs of the situation. We have thus to see how far they so fit in.

Our great provincial languages are no dialects or vernaculars, as the ignorant sometimes call them. They are ancient languages with a rich inheritance, each spoken by many millions of persons, each tied up inextricably with the life and culture and ideas of the masses as well as of the upper classes. It is axiomatic that the masses can only grow educationally and culturally through the medium of their own language. Therefore it is inevitable that we lay stress on the provincial languages and carry on most of our work through them. The use of any other language will result in isolating the educated few from the masses and in retarding the growth of the people. Ever since the Congress took to the use of these provincial languages in carrying on its work we developed contacts with the masses rapidly and the strength and prestige of the Congress increased all over the country. The Congress message reached the most distant hamlet and the political consciousness of the masses grew. Our system of education and public work must therefore be based on the provincial languages.

What are these languages? Hindustani, of course, with its principal aspects of Hindi and Urdu, and its various dialects. Then there are Bengali, Marathi, and Gujarati, sister languages of Hindi and nearly

allied to it. In the south there are Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam. Besides these there are Oriya, Assamese, and Sindhi, and Punjabi and Pushtu in the north-west. These dozen languages cover the whole of India, and of these Hindustani has the widest range and also claims a certain all-India character.

Without infringing in the least on the domain of the provincial languages, we must have a common all-India medium of communication. Some people imagine that English might serve as such, and to some extent English has served as such for our upper classes and for all-India political purposes. But this is manifestly impossible if we think in terms of the masses. We cannot educate millions of people in a totally foreign tongue. English will inevitably remain an important language for us because of our past associations and because of its present importance in the world. It will be the principal medium for us to communicate with the outside world, though I hope it will not be the only medium for this purpose. I think we should cultivate other foreign languages also, such as French, German, Russian, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, and Japanese. But English cannot develop into an all-India language, known by millions.

The only possible all-India language is Hindustani. Already it is spoken by a hundred and twenty millions and partly understood by scores of millions of others. Even those who do not know it at all at present can learn it far more easily than a foreign language. There are many common words in all the languages of India, but what is far more important is the common cultural background of these languages, the similarity of ideas, and the many linguistic affinities. This makes it relatively easy for an Indian to learn another Indian language.

What is Hindustani? Vaguely we say that this word includes both Hindi and Urdu, as spoken and as written in the two scripts, and we endeavour to strike a golden mean between the two, and call this idea of ours Hindustani. Is this just an idea with no reality for its basis, or is it something more?

There are many variations in Hindustani as spoken and written in various parts of northern and central India. Numerous dialects have arisen. But these are the inevitable consequences of want of education, and with mass education these dialects will tend to disappear and a certain standardization will set in.

There is the question of script. Devanagari and the Urdu scripts are utterly different from each other, and there is no possibility of either of them assimilating the other. Therefore wisely we have agreed that both should have full play. This will be an additional burden on those who have to learn both and it will encourage separatism to some extent. But

we have to put up with these disadvantages, for any other course is not open to us. Both the scripts are part of the genius of our language, and around them have gathered not only literatures peculiar to the scripts, but also a wall of sentiment which is solid and irremovable. What the distant future will bring to us I do not know, but for the present both must remain.

The Latin script has been advocated as a solution of some of our linguistic difficulties. It is certainly more efficient than either Hindi or Urdu from the point of view of rapid work. In these days of the typewriter and duplicator and other mechanical devices the Latin script has great advantages over the Indian scripts, which cannot fully utilize these new devices. But in spite of these advantages I do not think there is the slightest chance of the Latin script replacing Devanagari or Urdu. There is the wall of sentiment, of course, strengthened even more by the fact that the Latin script is associated with our alien rulers. But there are more solid grounds also for its rejection. The scripts are essential parts of our literatures; without them we would be largely cut off from our old inheritance.

It may be possible, however, to reform our scripts to some extent. We have at present, besides Hindi and Urdu, the Bengali, Marathi, and Gujarati scripts, each of these three being very nearly allied to Devanagari. It should be easily possible to have a common script for these four languages. This need not necessarily be Devanagari exactly as it is written today, but a slight variation of it. The development of a common script for Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, and Marathi would be a definite gain and would bring the four languages much nearer to each other.

I do not know how far it is possible for the Dravidian languages of the south to fit in with a northern script, or to evolve a common script for themselves. Those who have studied this might enlighten us on this point.

The Urdu script has to remain as it is, though some slight simplification of it might be attempted. It might easily absorb the Sindhi script, which is very similar to it.

Thus we ought to have later on two scripts: the composite Devanagari-Bengali-Marathi-Gujarati and the Urdu, and also, if necessary, a southern script. No attempt must be made to suppress any one of these, unless there is a possibility by general agreement of those concerned to fit in the southern languages with a northern script, which is likely to be Hindi or a slight variation of it.

Let us consider Hindustani both as the mother tongue of the north and central India and as an all-India language. The two aspects are different and must be dealt with separately.

Hindi and Urdu are the two main aspects of this language. Obviously they have the same basis, the same grammar, the same fund of ordinary words to draw upon. They are, in fact, the same basic language. And yet the present differences are considerable, and one is said to draw its inspiration from Sanskrit and the other to some extent from Persian. To consider Hindi as the language of the Hindus and Urdu as that of the Muslims is absurd. Urdu, except for its script, is of the very soil of India and has no place outside India. It is even today the home language of large numbers of Hindus in the north.

The coming of Muslim rulers to India brought Persian as a court language, and to the end of the Moghal period Persian continued to be so used. The language of the people in north and central India continued to be Hindi throughout. Being a living language, it absorbed a number of Persian words; Gujarati and Marathi did likewise. But essentially Hindi remained Hindi. A highly Persianized form of Hindi developed round the imperial courts, and this was called *Rekhta*. The word Urdu seems to have come into use during the Moghal period in the camps of the Moghals, but it appears to have been used almost synonymously with Hindi. It did not signify even a variation of Hindi. Right up to the Revolt of 1857, Urdu meant Hindi, except in regard to script. As is well known, some of the finest Hindi poets have been Muslims. Till this revolt, and even for some time after, the usual term applied to the language was Hindi. This did not refer to the script, but to the language, the language of Hind. Muslims who wrote in the Urdu script usually called the language Hindi.

It was in the second half of the nineteenth century that the words Hindi and Urdu began to signify something different from each other. This separatism grew. Probably it was a reflex of the rising national consciousness which first affected the Hindus, who began to lay stress on purer Hindi and the Devanagari script. Nationalism was for them inevitably at the beginning a form of Hindu nationalism. A little later the Muslims slowly developed their form of nationalism, which was Muslim nationalism, and they began to consider Urdu as their own particular preserve. Controversy centred round the scripts and their use in law courts and public offices. Thus the growing separatism in language and the conflict of scripts was the outcome of the growth of political and national consciousness, which to begin with took a communal turn. As this nationalism became truly national, thinking in terms of India and not in those of a particular community, the desire to stop this separatist tendency in language grew with it, and intelligent people began to lay stress on the innumerable common features of Hindi and Urdu. There was talk of Hindustani not only as the language of northern and

central India, but as the national language of the whole country. But still, unfortunately, communalism is strong enough in India, and so the separatist tendency persists along with the unifying tendency. This separatism in language is bound to disappear with the fuller development of nationalism. It is well to bear this in mind, for only then shall we understand what the root cause of the evil is. Scratch a separatist in language and you will invariably find that he is a communalist, and very often a political reactionary.

Although the terms Hindi and Urdu were interchangeably used for a a long time during the Moghal period, Urdu was applied more to the language of the mixed camps of the Moghals. Round about the court and camp many Persian words were current, and these crept into the language. As one moves southwards, away from the centres of Moghal court life, Urdu merges into purer Hindi. Inevitably this influence of the courts affected the towns far more than the rural areas, and the towns of the north far more than the towns of central India.

And this leads us to the real difference between Urdu and Hindi today—Urdu is the language of the towns and Hindi the language of the villages. Hindi is, of course, spoken also in the towns, but Urdu is almost entirely an urban language. The problem of bringing Urdu and Hindi nearer to each other thus becomes the much vaster problem of bringing the town and the village nearer to each other. Every other way will be a superficial way without lasting effect. Languages change organically when the people who speak them change.

While Hindi and Urdu or ordinary household speech do not differ much from each other, the gulf between the literary languages has grown in recent years. In written literary productions it is formidable, and this has led some people to believe that some evil-minded persons are the cause of it. That is a foolish fancy, though undoubtedly there are individuals who take delight in increasing separatist tendencies. But living languages do not function in this way, nor can they be twisted much by a few individuals. We have to look deeper for the causes of this apparent divergence.

This divergence, though unfortunate in itself, is really a sign of healthy growth. Both Hindi and Urdu, after a long period of stagnation, have woken up and are pushing ahead. They are struggling to give expression to new ideas and leaving the old ruts for new forms of literary expression. The vocabulary of each is poor as far as these new ideas are concerned, but each can draw on a rich source. This source is Sanskrit in the one case and Persian in the other; and hence, as soon as we leave the ordinary language of the home or the market-place and enter more abstract regions, the divergences grow. Literary societies,

jealous of the purity of the language they use, carry this tendency to extreme limits, and then accuse each other of encouraging separatist tendencies. The beam in one's own eye is not seen, the mote in the other's eye is obvious enough.

The immediate result of all this has been to increase the gulf between Hindi and Urdu, and sometimes it almost appears that the two are destined to develop into separate languages. And yet this fear is unjustified and there is no reason for alarm. We must welcome the new life that is coursing through both Hindi and Urdu, even though it might lead to a temporary widening of the gulf. Hindi and Urdu are both at present inadequate for the proper expression of modern ideas, scientific, political, economic, commercial, and sometimes cultural, and they are both trying hard, and with success, to enrich themselves so as to meet the needs of a modern community. Why should either be jealous of the other? We want our language to be as rich as possible, and this will not happen if we try to suppress either Hindi words or Urdu words because we feel that they do not fit in with our own particular backgrounds. We want both and we must accept both. We must realise that the growth of Hindi means the growth of Urdu and *vice versa*. The two will powerfully influence each other and the vocabulary and ideas of each will grow. But each must keep its doors and windows wide open for these words and ideas. Indeed, I would like Hindi and Urdu to welcome and absorb words and ideas from foreign languages and make them their own. It is absurd to coin new words from Sanskrit or Persian for well-known and commonly used words in English or French or other foreign languages.

I have no doubt in my mind that Hindi and Urdu must come nearer to each other, and, though they may wear different garbs, will be essentially one language. The forces favouring this unification are too strong to be resisted by individuals. We have nationalism and the widespread desire to have a united India, and this must triumph. But stronger than this is the effect of rapid communications and transport and interchange of ideas and revolutionary changes going on in our political and social spheres. We cannot remain in our narrow grooves when the torrent of world change rushes past us. Education, when it spreads to the masses, will also inevitably produce standardisation and unification.

We must not, therefore, even look upon the separate development of Hindi and Urdu with suspicion. The enthusiast for Urdu should welcome the new spirit that is animating Hindi and the lover of Hindi should equally appreciate the labours of those who seek to advance Urdu. They may work today along parallel lines somewhat separate from each other,

but the two will coalesce. Nevertheless, though we tolerate willingly this existing separatism, we must help in the process of this unification. On what must this unity be based? Surely on the masses. The masses must be the common factor between Hindi and Urdu. Most of our present troubles are due to highly artificial literary languages cut off from the masses. When writers write, whom do they write for? Every writer must have, consciously or subconsciously, an audience in his mind, whom he is seeking to influence or convert to his viewpoint. Because of our vast illiteracy, that audience has unhappily been limited, but even so it is big enough and it will grow rapidly. I am no expert in this matter, but my own impression is that the average writer in Hindi or Urdu does not seek to take advantage of even the existing audience. He thinks much more of the literary coteries in which he moves, and writes for them in the language that they have come to appreciate. His voice and his word do not reach the much larger public, and, if they happen to reach this public, they are not understood. Is it surprising that Hindi and Urdu books have restricted sales? Even our newspapers in Hindi and Urdu barely tap the great reading public because they, too, generally use the language of the literary coteries.

Our writers, therefore, must think in terms of a mass audience and clientele and must deliberately seek to write for them. This will result automatically in the simplification of language and the stilted and flowery phrases and constructions, which are always signs of decadence in a language, will give place to words of strength and power. We have not yet fully recovered from the notion that culture and literary attainments are the products and accompaniments of courtly circles. If we think in this way we remain confined in narrow circles and can find no entrance to the hearts and minds of the masses. Culture today must have a wider mass basis, and language, which is one of the embodiments of that culture, must also have that basis.

This approach to the masses is not merely a question of simple words and phrases. It is equally a matter of ideas and of the inner content of those words and phrases. Language which is to make appeal to the masses must deal with the problems of those masses, with their joys and sorrows, their hopes and aspirations. It must represent and mirror the life of the people as a whole and not that of a small group at the top. Then only will it have its roots in the soil and find sustenance from it.

This applies not only to Hindi and Urdu, but to all our Indian languages. I know that in all of them these ideas are finding utterance, and they are looking more and more towards the masses. This process must be accelerated, and our writers should deliberately aim at encouraging it.

It is also desirable, I think, for our languages to cultivate contacts with foreign literatures by means of translations of both the old classics and modern books. This will put us in touch with cultural and literary and social movements in other countries and will strengthen our own languages by the infusion of fresh ideas.

I imagine that probably Bengali, of all the Indian languages, has gone furthest in developing contacts with the masses. Literary Bengali is not something apart from and far removed from the life of the people of Bengal. The genius of one man, Rabindranath Tagore, has bridged that gap between the cultured few and the masses, and today his beautiful songs and poems are heard even in the humblest hut. They have not only added to the wealth of Bengali literature, but enriched the life of the people of Bengal, and made of their language a powerful medium of the finest literary expression in the simplest terms. We cannot produce geniuses for the asking, but we can all learn from this and shape our course accordingly. In this connection I should also like to mention Gujarati. I am told that Gandhiji's simple and powerful language has had a great influence on modern Gujarati writing.

Let us now consider the other aspect of Hindustani as an all-India language, bearing in mind that it is no rival to the great provincial languages and there is no question of its encroaching on them. For the moment let us set aside the question of script, for both scripts must have full play. We cannot, of course, insist on everyone learning both scripts; that would be an intolerable burden for the masses. The state should encourage both scripts and leave the persons concerned, or their parents, to choose between the two. Let us therefore consider the content of the language apart from its script.

Apart from its widespread range and dominance over India, Hindustani has certain other advantages as an all-India language. It is relatively easy to learn and its grammar is simple, except for the confusion of its genders. Can we simplify it still further?

We have a remarkably successful experiment to guide us, that of Basic English. A number of scholars, after many years' labour, have evolved a simplified form of English which is essentially English and indistinguishable from it, and yet which is astonishingly easy to learn. Grammar has almost disappeared except for a few simple rules, and the basic vocabulary has been reduced to about 850 words, excluding scientific, technical, and commercial terms. This whole vocabulary and grammar can be put down on one sheet of paper, and an intelligent person can learn it in two or three weeks. He will require practice, of course, in the use of the new language.

This experiment must not be confused with the many previous attempts to evolve a common world language—Volapuk, Esperanto, etc. All such languages, though simple, were highly artificial, and to learn them was an additional burden.

The breath of life did not vitalize them and they could never become the languages of large numbers of people. Basic English, having all their advantages, does not suffer from this disadvantage, as it is a living language. Those who learn Basic English cannot only have a simple and efficient means of communication with others, but they are already on the threshold of standard English and can proceed further if they so wish.

My enthusiasm for Basic English might lead to the query, why not have this as an all-India language? No, this cannot be, for the whole genius of this language is alien to our people and we would have to transplant them completely before we could impose this as an all-India language. The practical difficulties would also be far greater than in the case of Hindustani, which is already so widely known all over India.

But I think that where we teach English as a foreign tongue—and we shall have to do this on an extensive scale—Basic English should be taught. Only those who wish to make a special study of the language should proceed to standard English.

Can we evolve a Basic Hindustani after the fashion of Basic English? I think this is easily possible if our scholars will turn their minds to this end. The grammar should be as simple as possible, almost non-existent, and yet it must not do violence to the existing grammar of the language. The essential thing to be borne in mind is that while this basic language is complete in itself for the expression of all non-technical ideas, it is yet a stepping-stone to the further study of the language. The vocabulary might consist of a thousand words or so, not chosen at random because they are common words in the Indian languages, but because they form a complete whole and require no extraneous assistance for all ordinary speaking and writing.

Such a Basic Hindustani should be the all-India language, and with a little effort from the state it will spread with extreme rapidity all over the country and will help in bringing about that national unity which all desire. It will bring Hindi and Urdu closer together and will also help in developing an all-India linguistic unity. On that solid and common foundation, even if variations grow or diversions occur, they will not lead to separatism. Those who wish to add to their knowledge of Hindustani can easily do so; those who are content with knowing Basic Hindustani only can yet take part in the larger life of the nation.

I have said previously that we should not object to the development of Hindi or Urdu separately. The new words that come in from either direction will enrich our inheritance, if they are vital, living words forced on us by circumstances or coming up from the masses. But the formation of artificial words with no real sanction behind them has no such significance. To a large extent we have to form artificial words to meet the growing needs of our political, economic, scientific, and commercial life. In the formation of such words we should try to avoid duplication and separatism. We should be bold enough, I think, to lift bodily foreign technical words which have become current coin in many parts of the world, and to adopt them as Hindustani words. Indeed, I should like them to be adopted by all the Indian languages. This will make it easier for our people to read technical and scientific works in various languages, Indian and foreign. Any other course will lead to chaos and confusion in the mind of the student, who has to grapple with large numbers of technical terms, and who often has to read important books in other languages. An attempt to have a separate and distinct scientific vocabulary is to isolate and stultify our scientific growth and to put an intolerable burden on the teacher and the taught alike. The public life and affairs of the world are already closely knit together and form a single whole. We should make it as easy as possible for our people to understand them and take part in them, and for foreigners to understand our public affairs.

Many foreign words can and should thus be taken in, but many technical words will have to be taken from our own language also. It is desirable that linguistic and technical experts should make a list of such words for common use. This will not only bring about uniformity and precision in matters where variety and vagueness are highly undesirable, but will also prevent the use of absurd phrases and expressions. Our journalist friends have a knack of translating literally foreign words and phrases without caring much for the meaning behind them, and then these loose words become current coin and produce confusion of thought. "Trade union" has been translated sometimes as *vyapar sangh*, a perfectly literal translation and yet as far removed from the truth as anything could be. But the choicest of the translations has been that of "imperial preference." This was called by an enterprising journalist *shahi pasand*.

What should, then, be the policy of the state in regard to language? The state has to decide this question in regard to its courts and offices and education.

The official language of each province for affairs of state should be the language of the province. But everywhere Hindustani, as the all-

India language, should be officially recognized, and documents in it accepted in both the Devanagari and Urdu scripts. In the Hindustani-speaking provinces the two scripts must be officially recognized, and it should be open to any person to address a court or an office in either script. The burden of supplying a copy in the other script should not be put upon him. The office or the court may occasionally use either script, but it would be absurd to enforce the rule that everything should be done in both scripts. The script that is mostly used in the area which the court or office serves will become the dominant script of that court or office. But notifications should be issued in both scripts.

State education must be governed by the rule that it should be given in the language of the student. Thus in each linguistic area the language of that area should be the medium of instruction. But I would go a step further. Wherever there are a sufficient number of people belonging to a linguistic group, even though they might be living in a different linguistic area, they can demand from the state that special provision be made for teaching them in their own language. This would depend, of course, on such students being easily accessible from a convenient centre, and it would apply to primary education and, perhaps, if the number were large enough, to secondary education. Thus in Calcutta the medium of instruction would be Bengali. But there are large numbers of people there whose mother tongues are Hindustani, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, etc. Each of these groups can claim from the state that their primary schools should be run in their own language. How far it will be possible to extend this to secondary education I do not quite know. That would depend on the number of pupils concerned and other factors. These pupils would, of course, have to learn Bengali, the language of the linguistic area they live in, but this is likely to be done in the early secondary stage and after.

In the Hindustani-speaking provinces both Devanagari and Urdu scripts will be taught in the schools, the pupils or their parents choosing between them. In the primary stage only one script should be used, but the learning of the other script should be encouraged in the secondary stage.

In the non-Hindustani-speaking provinces Basic Hindustani should be taught in the secondary stage, the script being left to the choice of the person concerned.

University education should be in the language of the linguistic area, Hindustani (either script) and a foreign language being compulsory subjects. This compulsion need not apply to technical schools and higher technical courses. Provision for teaching foreign languages as well as our classical languages should be made in our secondary schools, but the

subject should not be compulsory except for certain courses or for preparation for the university stage.

Among the provincial languages I have mentioned Pushtu and Punjabi. I think primary education should be given in these, but how far higher education can also be given through them is a doubtful matter requiring consideration, as they are not sufficiently advanced. Probably Hindustani will be the best medium for higher education in these areas.

I have, with great presumption, made various suggestions ranging from primary to university education. It will be easy to criticize what I have written and to point out the difficulties in the way, for I am no expert in education or in languages. But my very inexpertness is, perhaps, in my favour and I can consider the problem from a layman's point of view, with a detached outlook. Also I should like to make it clear that I am not discussing in this essay the important and difficult problem of education as a whole. I am only dealing with the language side of it. When we consider the whole subject of education we have to think in terms of the state and the society we are aiming at; we have to train our people to that end; we have to decide what our citizens should be like and what their occupations should be; we have to fit in this education to their life and occupations; we have to produce harmony and equilibrium in their private and social and public life. We shall have to lay far greater stress on technical and scientific training if we are to take our place in the modern world. All this and more we shall have to do, and in doing so we shall have to upset the present incompetent and inefficient and top-heavy system of education and build anew on securer foundations.

But for the moment let us confine ourselves to the question of language and arrive at some general agreement in regard to it. I have written this essay with a view to invite consideration of this problem from a wider angle. If we agree to the general principles I have discussed, the application of them in practice will not be difficult. We are not in a position to apply most of these principles today, in spite of so-called provincial autonomy. We have no financial resources and our hands are tied up in a variety of ways. But to the extent we can put our principles into practice we should do so.

It may be that there is general agreement in regard to some of the suggestions I have made, and some disagreement in regard to others. Let us at least know where we agree; the points for discussion and debate will then be limited in number and we can consider them separately.

I might add that my frequent references to linguistic areas and the language of the province necessitate that provincial units should correspond with such language areas.

To facilitate their consideration I give below some of my main suggestions:

1. Our public work should be carried on and state education should be given in the language of each linguistic area. This language should be the dominant language in that area. These Indian languages to be recognized officially for this purpose are: Hindustani (both Hindi and Urdu), Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya, Assamese, Sindhi, and, to some extent, Pushtu and Punjabi.

2. In the Hindustani-speaking area both Hindi and Urdu, with their scripts, should be officially recognized. Public notifications should be issued in both scripts. Either script might be used by a person in addressing a court or a public office, and he should not be called upon to supply a copy in the other script.

3. The medium of state instruction in the Hindustani area being Hindustani, both scripts will be recognized and used. Each pupil or his parents will make a choice of script. Pupils will not be compelled to learn both scripts but may be encouraged to do so in the secondary stage.

4. Hindustani (both scripts) will be recognized as the all-India language. As such it will be open to any person throughout India to address a court or public office in Hindustani (either script) without any obligation to give a copy in another script or language.

5. An attempt should be made to unify the Devanagari, Bengali, Gujarati and Marathi scripts and to produce a composite script suited to printing, typing and the use of modern mechanical devices.

6. The Sindhi script should be absorbed in the Urdu script, which should be simplified, to the extent that is possible, and suited to printing, typing, etc.

7. The possibility of approximating the southern scripts to Devanagari should be explored. If that is not considered feasible, then an attempt should be made to have a common script for the southern languages—Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

8. It is not possible for us to think in terms of the Latin script for our language, for the present at least, in spite of various advantages which that script possesses. We must thus have two scripts: the composite Devanagari—Bengali—Gujarati—Marathi, and the Urdu—Sindhi; and, if necessary, a script for the southern languages, unless this can be approximated to the first.

9. The tendency for Hindi and Urdu in the Hindustani-speaking area to diverge and develop separately need not be viewed with alarm, nor should any obstruction be placed in the development of either. This is

to some extent natural as new and more abstruse ideas come into the language. The development of either will enrich the language. There is bound to be an adjustment later on as world forces and nationalism press in this direction and mass education will bring a measure of standardization and uniformity.

10. We should lay stress on the language (Hindi, Urdu, as well as the other Indian languages) looking to the masses and speaking in terms of them. Writers should write for the masses in simple language understood by them, and they should deal with problems affecting the masses. Courtly and affected style and flowery phrases should be discouraged and a simple vigorous style developed. Apart from its other advantages, this will also lead to uniformity between Hindi and Urdu.

11. A Basic Hindustani should be evolved out of Hindustani on the lines of Basic English. This should be a simple language with very little grammar and a vocabulary of about a thousand words. It must be a complete language, good enough for all ordinary speech and writing, and yet within the framework of Hindustani, and a stepping stone for the further study of that language.

12. Apart from Basic Hindustani, we should fix upon scientific, technical, political and commercial words to be used in Hindustani (both Hindi and Urdu) as well as, if possible, in other Indian languages. Where necessary, these words should be taken from foreign languages and bodily adopted. Lists of other words from our own languages should be made, so that in all technical and such like matters we might have a precise and uniform vocabulary.

13. The policy governing state education should be that education is to be given in the language of the student. In each linguistic area education from the primary to the university stage will be given in the language of the province. Even within a linguistic area, if there are a sufficient number of students whose mother tongue is some other Indian language, they will be entitled to receive primary education in their mother tongue, provided they are easily accessible from a convenient centre. It may also be possible, if the number is large enough, to give them secondary education in the mother tongue as well. But all such students will have to take, as a compulsory subject, the language of the linguistic area they live in.

14. In the non-Hindustani-speaking area, Basic Hindustani should be taught in the secondary stage, the script being left to the choice of the person concerned.

15. The medium of instruction for university education will be the language of the linguistic area. Hindustani (either script) and a foreign language should be compulsory subjects. This compulsion of learning

additional languages need not apply to higher technical courses, though a knowledge of languages is desirable even there.

16. Provision for teaching foreign languages, as well as our classical languages, should be made in our secondary schools, but the subjects should not be compulsory, except for certain special courses, or for preparation for the university stage.

17. Translations should be made of a considerable number of classical and modern works in foreign literatures into the Indian languages, so that our languages might develop contacts with the cultural, literary and social movements in other countries, and gain strength thereby.

MISCELLANEOUS

34. To Lionel Fielden[1]

Allahabad
Jan. 3, 1937

My dear Fielden,[2]

Your letter reached me and it made painful reading.[3] I am afraid you are a misfit in that job or in India: but then all of us are. What is one to do about it? You blame others (including innocent me!) but does not the fault lie really in the environment, in circumstances which are bigger than individuals, in the unhealthy relation between India and England, in the topsyturvy world itself? Broadcasting is a great thing, I believe in it. But it is after all a part of a much larger whole, and if the body is sick how can you treat a finger or a limb?

I cannot write to you all I want to. I am writing this note in haste. I am off on one of my interminable tours and for seven weeks I shall have no rest. But even if I had more time I doubt if a letter would

1. Lionel Fielden, *The Natural Bent*, (London, 1962), pp. 197-198.
2. (1896-1974); controller of broadcasting in India, 1935-40; director of public relations, Allied Control Commission, Italy, 1944-45; his works include *Beggar my Neighbour*.
3. He wrote to Jawaharlal that he was a misfit in All India Radio, for he could neither present the Indian point of view in his broadcasts nor could he accept the conditions forced upon him by his superiors.

convey to you all I feel. I wish you could come here and spend a few days with us. Both my sister and I would be happy to have you and perhaps you might feel better and calmer for a change.

I have had to put up with a great deal which might have embittered me and filled me with hate and yet I have survived. I feel pretty lonely often enough but not bitter against anybody. Why should you succumb to this bitterness and hate? I suppose Delhi, Imperial Delhi, is partly responsible for it. It is not easy to remain sane there and even I cannot stand it for long.

India is a very friendly place. It has so many hateful aspects but so many more lovable ones. You must get behind the mask and get in tune with it. Unhappily you have started at the wrong place, with the wrong people. Not your fault of course.

I wish I could help you. Perhaps, I can in some odd ways. Write to me sometimes about books and pictures and anything else that you like. Your letters will be welcome. In spite of politics, I have not lost my humanity.

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

35. The Role of a Cartoonist[1]

How many of us have waited from day to day for Shankar's[2] cartoon? How many have turned to the page of the newspaper containing his cartoon before we have seen the news of the day? That cartoon has not only given us pleasure but a new insight into current events. For a true cartoonist is not just a maker of fun but one who sees the inner significance of an event and by a few master strokes impresses it on others.

1. Allahabad, 24 February 1937. Foreword written by Jawaharlal for the book containing a collection of one hundred and one cartoons by Shankar.
2. Shankar (K. Shankar Pillai) (b. 1902); worked as cartoonist for *The Hindustan Times*, 1932-46; founder-editor, *Shankar's Weekly*, 1948; founded Children's Book Trust, 1957 and International Dolls Museum, New Delhi; founder, International Children's Competition and B.C. Roy Memorial Children's Library and Reading Room; editor, *Children's World*.

Shankar has that rare gift, rarer in India than elsewhere, and without the least bit of malice or ill will he points out, with an artist's skill, the weaknesses and foibles of those who display themselves on the public stage. That is a service to all of us for which we should be grateful. For we are apt to grow pompous and self-centred, and it is good to have the veil of our conceit torn occasionally. And so I gladly pay my tribute to Shankar and I hope that he will long continue to enlighten us and amuse us and pull us down a peg or two.

36. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
March 25, 1937

My dear Krishna,

... One small matter. I am getting rather fed up with my name. It is always being mis-spelt and mis-pronounced. The other day a B.B.C. announcer got hopelessly muddled over it and went on ha-haing. Unfortunately I cannot change my name but I propose to make a slight change in the way it is written. Jawaharlal consists really of two Hindustani words: Jawahar and Lal. In India one usually combines the two, but this long word has got a terrifying look about it and foreigners cannot get hold of it. So it would be better in future to separate the two. My name should therefore be given as: Jawahar Lal Nehru....

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

37. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Allahabad
April 5, 1937

My dear Krishna,
I sent you a copy of C.F. Andrews's letter[2] to keep you informed of that particular development. I do not quite understand in what way the contents do not represent facts. Your letter does not make this clear. But Andrews's letter hardly contains any facts, only suggestions which he passed on to me. Therefore I referred him to you. Perhaps you do not know that I have known Andrews rather intimately for more than twenty years. His politics are not mine, indeed I do not consider him political at all, but in his own way he has done extraordinary good work. His desire to do something for me was perfectly natural, though he may not prove helpful at all. He is the last person to barge in where he is not wanted. To avoid any misunderstanding in this as in any other case, a direct contact and explanation always seem to me to be desirable.

I want to tell you that I have no grievance against John Lane because the business collapsed. That was his misfortune as well as mine and others and, so far as I am concerned, I want to forget the affair and go ahead. The business of the best of people fails sometimes and certainly I have not thought in terms of any evil intentions on the part of Lane....

It is long since I left the law but the horror of legal procedure and solicitors and their kind sticks to me. Whether other methods may be right or wrong, this method, to my thinking, should almost always be avoided. You are assuring me that everything will be done with 'caution and rectitude'. Of course, I have no doubt of that. But I have an uncomfortable feeling of moving about solicitors' chambers and police courts, and every word being weighed in the legal balance lest it commits, and interviews being avoided lest they entangle, and the policeman's warning that what one says may be used against one, etc., etc. Life is complicated enough already, why should we make it more so?

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. He wrote to Jawaharlal in early March 1937: "Allen and Unwin are now (with two other firms) the liquidators of John Lane and I have been urging them with all my power to make good the royalties which were due to you from the bankrupt firm. Also I pressed them very strongly to come immediately into touch directly with Krishna Menon and not merely deal with him through the resuscitated firm of John Lane."

...The more I think of it, the clearer I get in my own mind that I must not take the initiative in any litigation. The very thought of it has upset me sufficiently, the actuality will be far worse, and the wrong kind of publicity that this will give me in India and England will be a torture. I would sooner lose money any day than lose my peace of mind.

Owing to my unfortunate illness the power of attorney could not be signed and witnessed last week. I hope to send it this week.

This letter has been written in bed.

Yours,
Jawaharlal

38. To J. Barnes[1]

Allahabad
April 22, 1937

Dear Barnes,

Your letter[2] reached some months back. I did not answer it as you were travelling about and I thought that it would take you some time to reach England.

I was glad to hear from you after a long interval. I have been having a very busy time and perhaps because I rather overdid it, I have spent the last few weeks in bed. I am recovering now.

It is a little difficult to discuss vital and intricate questions in a letter. But I do agree with you that it is desirable for Indians to go to various centres of European culture other than those in England. We have got too much into the habit of looking at the world through British spectacles. But circumstances are against us and we have not got the capacity to make any such arrangement on a wide enough scale. Besides, the world is in a curious way and one does not know how long European culture itself will last.

I think you are right in saying that my outlook is largely coloured by the British background of education. I suppose I cannot help it, though

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter of 30 December 1936, Major Barnes argued that "Indians should be Indians, learn things independently of England and judge things for themselves."

I try to see things straight. When the world itself is so crooked, it is not easy to have a straight view of anything.

With all good wishes to you and your wife,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

39. Nationalism and Socialism[1]

I send my greetings and good wishes to the conference that is being held in London on socialism in India.[2] In a country under alien domination the first reaction and the primary urge is inevitably to be nationalist. That has been so in India and even now nationalism is the dominant feeling in the country. But force of economic circumstances and the urgency of finding a solution for the problems that affect the masses, lead people to look more and more towards socialism, for nationalism by itself offers no such solution. And so socialist thought has spread in India rapidly during these past few years and has coloured the whole nationalist movement.

As a socialist I believe that socialism alone will solve our problems or the problems of the world. But socialism is not just a collection of slogans. It requires careful thought and working out in relation to our country. I hope that the conference in London will help in clarifying the issues so that all of us may be able to think more clearly about them.

1. Rangoon, 7 May 1937. A.I.C.C. File No. F.D.-7/1936-38, p. 307, N.M.M.L.
2. The conference was to be held on 22-23 May 1937.

40. To Sajjad Zaheer[1]

Allahabad
July 1, 1937

My dear Bunne,

Your letter[2] came last evening. I do not think there will be any difficulty about the lawyer for your defence on the 10th. Both Katju and Kapil Deva are perfectly willing to appear for you unless some important engagement prevents them. You are wrong in thinking that Kapil Deva was not keen on going. For the 29th he found it impossible to go because of a number of other engagements on that day. I saw Katju also a few days ago and he told me that he would gladly appear for you if he could manage it. He has not returned from Chapra yet and so I cannot get his final word for the 16th. But I am leaving a letter for him and by tomorrow or the day after he ought to be back and we shall know. If he can go, this matter is settled; if he cannot go then Kapil Deva certainly will go. I saw him last night and he promised to do so in case Katju was not going. There is no point in both going. Kapil Deva was rather worried at having created the impression in your mind that he did not want to go. He assured me that he was keen on appearing for you.

I am going to Wardha today and at the earliest I shall come back on the 8th night, perhaps it may be the 9th. I hope to see you here then. I shall be in Allahabad only for a day or so as I shall leave on the 10th night for Sherwani's constituency.

I hope you are none the worse after a few days in the lock-up. My own opinion is that it is a very desirable part in a person's education and far from minding it you should almost welcome it! But of course you should fight this case out fully on larger grounds of principle. I am glad to learn the nature of the speech you delivered. That will make it a good test case.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-57/1937, pp. 35-36, N.M.M.L.
2. Sajjad Zaheer was arrested in June 1937 at Mussoorie for a speech delivered at the Unnao kisan conference. In his letter of 29 June 1937, he informed Jawaharlal that he had been released on bail and that the hearing in his case would take place in July 1937.

Will you assure your father and mother on my behalf that we shall gladly do all we can in the matter and, in any event, not to worry? This is a part of the day's work.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

41. To Ernst Toller[1]

Allahabad
July 19, 1937

My dear Toller,

I was delighted to have your letter[2] of March 30th. But it took a very long time to reach me. I am very glad to have good news of you and to find that your work and your lectures are having a fine reception in America. Thank you for the press cuttings that you have sent me.

I know nothing about S. B. Shastri who offers to translate your book in Marathi. I am enquiring about him. But in any event my own advice to you will be not to agree to the publication of any of your books in India unless you are paid some royalty. It is true sales in India are very limited and you are not likely to make much money. Still there is no reason why an author should be exploited. As you seem to like the idea, it may be possible to arrange for the translation and publication of your book in one or two Indian languages. The principal and most widespread language here is Hindi or Hindustani. I am enquiring from a Hindi publisher if he would like to take this up. Marathi is also a well-known language spoken in western and central India. I shall write to you or one of my colleagues will write as soon as we have more information from Hindi and Marathi publishers.

There are undoubtedly strong fascist tendencies in India but they are not organised and they cannot easily organise themselves separately under present conditions. Indian fascism and British fascism must necessarily be in conflict because Indian fascism will be aggressively nationalistic. But in our nationalist movement these fascist tendencies are increasingly

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Toller had observed that the European war had already commenced and it was only a matter of time before the actual hostilities began.

evident. At the same time socialistic tendencies are also becoming more and more evident and they are better organised. The Nazis have carried on for the last two or three years a consistent and deliberate propaganda in India directly as well as indirectly. They have not had very much success.

My daughter is here with me now. She came to spend the summer with us and will be returning to Oxford in September.

Is your wife with you? How long do you expect to remain in the States? Do send me your new plays when they come out.

With all good wishes and affectionate regards,

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

42. To J. A. D. Naoroji[1]

Allahabad
August 30, 1937

My dear Jal,

Thank you for your letter[2] containing your musings on the imperial race as well as your countrymen. Now that you are in London, I hope you have had better company than on board. That latest type of developed humanity, the smart relatively young managing director woman, has no doubt come to your aid. I do not personally fancy eyes of different colours, but no doubt it must be intriguing.

Indu is sailing from Bombay on the P. & O. *Viceroy of India* on the 11th September. Why P. & O.? Well, there was little to choose between John Bull and Mussolini. But the real consideration is an economic one. The P. & O. give 50% reduction on students, a large enough bait for most of us to swallow. Indu will spend a few days in Paris and is likely to reach London by the 1st October. She would like to meet you there. I do not know your exact address. But if you like you can get into touch with her through Agatha Harrison, 2 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge Road, London S.W. 11.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter of 31 July 1937, Naoroji stated that the disintegration of the British Empire was far more obvious and that the British would give way if "we definitely give some show of better moral stamina and some real purpose."

I have had a long complaint from an eminent scientist—it runs to thirteen foolscap typed pages—about the Tatas' scholarships being given to foreigners. I was surprised to learn this. Why should Tatas give these scholarships to foreigners?[3]

Nan, as you have no doubt heard, has developed into an honourable minister.[4] It is a queer world. Anyway you happen to be in London, so have a good time not only with managing directors but others, and do not be in a hurry to come back. This is a dull country.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. Naoroji explained that there were two kinds of Tata scholarships and in accordance with the trust's policy one set was to be distributed internationally without regard to the nationality of the recipient and the other was meant for Indians only.
4. Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit served as Minister for Local Self-Government, U.P., 1937-39.

43. To Sushila Prasad[1]

Allahabad
August 31, 1937

Dear Madam,[2]
I have your letter. I deal below with the questions you have put me.

(a) It is a fact that part of my daughter's education is taking place in foreign countries. This is because in many ways there are greater facilities for acquiring the kind of education I should like her to have. In some ways the education is superior and some things like foreign languages are more easily acquired in the countries where these languages flourish.

(b) The cost of education abroad is considerable though it need not be as much as Rs. 500/- per month. About two-thirds of that sum might suffice.

(c) It would be perfectly justifiable on the part of a public servant or the public servant's wife to desire to give the best possible education to his or her children. It is true that it will be difficult for a salary of

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(2)/1937, pp. 243-245, N.M.M.L.
2. A resident of Gorakhpur.

Rs. 500/- a month to undertake, under present conditions, the education abroad of one's children.

It should be remembered however that the facilities that a few public servants may have today because of their higher salaries do not extend to vast numbers of our countrymen. Most of these go completely without education, some get a very second-rate education and a microscopic number have the chance to get good education. The problem must therefore be seen not from the point of view of the few fortunate ones but of the vast numbers of the unfortunates. It is my conviction that given proper education we would find a first-rate material in our people, even from among the poorest classes. That opportunity is lacking to many. The state cannot and should not think in terms of favouring a few at the expense of the many. Individuals in our society today may be favourably placed in relation to others. That will continue so long as our social structure is not changed. But the state cannot give through its action far greater facilities of advancement to a small group and none at all to others.

The fixing of salaries at Rs. 500/- seems strange to many people who have been used to much larger salaries. But as a matter of fact this is the usual scale in most countries which are much richer than India. It is true that by just lowering the salaries and keeping the rest of the social structure intact a certain incongruity appears. The way out of the difficulty is to extend this principle to our social and economic life generally and not to reject an obviously good principle.

In regard to foreign education, I should personally like a large number of Indian boys and girls to go to foreign countries for their education. I should like the state to pick out promising students for this purpose and send them at state expense. Today most of the people who go do not make good at all. They are a waste of the nation's resources. If the state took proper charge of education and gave it free, as it should, and even sent out children abroad in large numbers, then there would be no such difficulty as you have pointed out. The difficulty is one of the transitional stage.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

44. To Shyam Sunder Lal[1]

Allahabad
September 6, 1937

Dear Friend,[2]

I have your long letter. I wish you would learn to write briefly. To a person who receives hundreds of letters it is a physical impossibility to read all of them much less to answer them.

I am sorry I cannot write a lengthy essay, in reply, discussing all the political and personal problems that you have touched upon. I appreciate your thinking about these matters. But have you realised that you may not have all the data before you and are thus not in full possession of the facts about any matter?

There are two personal matters which I shall deal with and which it surprises me that a man of intelligence should refer to. One is my publication of my *Autobiography* in England. Books are published to be read and to gain an audience. For the particular point of view I wanted a world audience and the only possible way of getting it was to get it published in Europe. If I want an American audience I get the book published in America. If I want a French audience I get it published in France. The publication of my book in England has done more for the Indian cause than the publication of any book at any time has done previously.

As for my daughter being educated in Europe, I should like as many competent young men and women to go to foreign countries for education as is possible. I should like the state to send thousands of Indians as other states do with their nationals.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5/1937, p. 31, N.M.M.L.
2. (1915-1967); a student leader, Allahabad University, 1936; member, Congress Socialist Party; worked as chief press adviser to G.B. Pant.

45. To Bharati Sarabhai[1]

Allahabad
September 30, 1937

My dear Bharati,
I have read your poem. Do I like it? I do not know. For as I read it, I began thinking of you and the verses became a far-away thing, vague and distant, and your voice seemed to come to me. Your changing voice and your changing expressions. Little girl, little woman, sometimes one, sometimes the other, very wise and sophisticated in the ways of the world, and yet so childlike, so hopeful. And then I wondered what life would bring to you of fulfilment, of disillusion, for each one of us has something of both.

My mind wandered and I thought less of you as a particular individual, as Bharati, and more of an impersonal little woman, a representative of her sex. Knowing little of the sex, and yet presuming to know something of human beings, that freakish accident of nature and art intrigues me, and I wonder often at my own ignorance.

Do not ask me for criticisms of your poems. I am not competent at this business. But I like many of your lines but others seem to me rather heavy.

I am full of work as ever and always it haunts me and calls me. Almost I feel like making a bonfire of my mountains of papers.

Love,

Yours,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

46. To Carlos da Cruz[1]

Allahabad
October 1, 1937

Dear Friend,[2]
I have your letter of the 9th September. I do not know much about this question but I should certainly like facilities to be given to our

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P.L.-16/1937, p. 115, N.M.M.L.
2. A Goan resident of Bombay.

fellow countrymen in Goa. My conception of freedom of India includes Goa. I am sending your letter on to the leader of the Congress Party in the assembly.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

47. To Bhulabhai Desai[1]

Allahabad
October 1, 1937

My dear Bhulabhai,
I am forwarding to you a letter received from a Goan. I do not know what is happening in the assembly regarding Goans but I hope that our attitude will be one of friendship to the Goans and not to regard them as foreigners.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P.L.-16/1937, p. 117, N.M.M.L.

48. To Ernest F. Paton[1]

Allahabad
November 11, 1937

Dear Mr. Paton,
I must apologise to you for the delay in answering your letter[2] and in thanking you for the book you sent me. I am interested in the Oxford group and I think it has been doing good work. Yet somehow the approach seems to me incomplete because it is an individual approach which does not seek to change the environment. Individual betterment and the giving of a new basis and a new quality to life are of course highly

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. He wrote to Jawaharlal from London commending the work of the moral rearmament movement, known as the Oxford Group.

important. And yet the determining effect of the environment continues and submerges individuals. I feel therefore that the approach must be from both the sides, the individual as well as the social. The latter leads me to socialism. It is a curious thing that while there are innumerable highly cultured individuals today who hate war, yet the world marches to war and destruction.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

49. On the Role of a Progressive Writer[1]

In my opinion a writer should not be a mere utopian; for unless he has something fundamental in his mind, and his writing has connection with reality, with actual life, his work cannot prove enduring. There have been writers in different ages who wrote things utopian which had no connection with life. For instance, there is a feeling that people should be provided with the opportunities and freedom to make themselves happy and good citizens, and therefore this question has also assumed some importance now as to why should the writers also not help in the attainment of that end. I think that one main obstacle in the way of reaching our ideals has been that we do not want to reach them. A progressive writer should present his ideals in such a way that his work would create among the people the aspirations and the desired fervour and enthusiasm to reach those ideals.

Politicians often involve themselves in petty matters and consequently they cannot do much when faced with bigger problems. But the writers, however, do not generally allow themselves to be involved in petty things, and they can therefore put before the people the fundamental problems in their proper perspective. For instance, the question of finding ways and means of bringing Urdu and Hindi together can be decided more satisfactorily through an academic discussion than by allowing it to be debated by the politicians who instead of solving it succeed in generating heat and feelings of distrust only. The writers can help a great deal in the matter because they generally keep themselves free from petty matters.

1. Speech at a conference of the Progressive Writers Association held in Allahabad on 14 November 1937. From *The Leader*, 18 November 1937.

I think a writer has to be an individualist but by being merely an individualist he cannot contribute to the progress of a nation. If, in his individualism, he keeps himself isolated from the society, he may produce a work of art, but that work would have little effect on the people, and it would not have in it the force of a race or a nation. If a race or a nation is affected by his work, then he would become, in a way, a representative of that nation or race. In the past, there have been many writers who could be described as representatives of the world and the age in which they lived. I am not prepared to accept the theory that in a socialist or communist world, individualism would be suppressed, though in the present-day world individualism is really being suppressed. When everyone is given an opportunity and liberty to think, read and write, then how can individualism be prevented from developing? It is, therefore, a mistaken belief that individualism gets suppressed under a socialist or communist set-up. Everybody should have an opportunity to rise and that is possible when the basis of society is socialist or communist. Progressive writers should, therefore, show to the people the way to reach ideals.

In the end, I want to request you to keep in your society the writers only and not allow among yourselves politicians like me. Otherwise, the creative and artistic side of your work would be affected. In Europe and America, there are societies of progressive writers and they have affected Europe and America to an immeasurable extent. For example, works of writers like Voltaire caused a great effect not only on the French Revolution, but on the whole world for about a hundred years. In Europe, artists have played a great role in the changes brought about in the world conditions. In India, there are very few such artists; one of them is Dr. Tagore, but there is a great need of writers like him. I wish to emphasize once again the need for having artists only as members of the society of progressive writers.

50. The Problems of the Kisans[1]

The biggest problem of India today is that of the peasant and the zamindar: what should be the laws regarding the land and who should be its owner? Whether the zamindars should be the owners of the land

1. Allahabad, 19 November 1937. Foreword to *Kisanon ka Sawal*, a pamphlet written by Z. A. Ahmad. Original in Hindi. For Jawaharlal's foreword to the English edition published in 1936, see *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 646-647.

and take work from others and reap the benefit of their labour, or whether the kisans who themselves work on the land should be the owners of the land, or the land should be considered as the property of the entire society, that is, all the people? The solution of this problem will have a tremendous effect on the life of the millions of our brothers and sisters. Before this major problem, all other problems of ours are minor. Our poverty is linked with this. Therefore we have to consider it thoroughly.

Only to sympathise with the poor peasants is not good enough for us. We have to understand what their problem is and find its solution. These days there is fermentation in all the villages of India. The burdens of poverty and unemployment and laziness are oppressing our people. How can we eradicate them?

Often people say that the zamindari system should be abolished; and I too share that opinion. But whatever we do, first we have to understand the problem well. What is the zamindari system? When and how did it begin in India? How many people in our country know that the zamindari system was introduced by the British rule? It was not there before.

This little book by Dr. Ahmad throws light on all these matters and whoever reads it will understand the real problems of India better. Therefore I am happy that this book has been translated into Hindi and I hope that it will find a large number of readers among the Hindi-knowing people.

51. Lenin[1]

Twenty years ago Lenin's name suddenly came before the world. Some people wondered what new thing had happened in Russia and who was this new man who dared do so. Most of the people thought that after some time he would weaken and his work too would disappear. But he was not weakened and his work went on progressing. During these twenty years a lot of changes took place in the world and are still taking place before our eyes. But now who is there who does not know Lenin and bow his head before his name? Even those who were his enemies recognised his superiority. And for the millions of the poor and unhappy people of the world he became a star which showed them the

1. Allahabad, 2 January 1938. D. G. Tendulkar Papers, N.M.M.L. Original in Hindi. Jawaharlal wrote this message presumably for some Hindi journal.

path of freedom. He got a place in the hearts of the millions and he revived those withered hearts. Lenin was born in Russia but he belongs to the whole world and we also seek our path in his light. It is meet and proper that we remember this great man and muster our courage by his memory.

52. To V. K. Krishna Menon[1]

Camp Wardha
February 3, 1938

My dear Krishna,

We have been reading accounts of the national independence demonstration organised by you in London. From all accounts this was very successful. I am sorry I could not keep my promise and send you a written speech for the occasion.

I arrived here today for the Working Committee meeting. Subhas has also just arrived but I have not had time to talk to him much. He told me however that you were far from well and generally worried as well as somewhat depressed. I am sorry to learn this. There is much that depresses us in the present state of the world but after all it does not help one to become a victim of circumstances.

I have myself seldom felt quite so slack mentally as I have been doing lately. My tour in the North West Frontier Province was cheering and I am glad I went. But the atmosphere in India is oppressive and I am looking forward eagerly to the end of the Congress session at Haripura. What exactly I shall do after that I do not quite know. I should like to take a fortnight off completely and go to an out-of-the-way place in the hills. If I do so I shall try to revise *Glimpses of World History*.

It is my intention, if the fates are not too unkind, to visit Europe next summer. Apart from other reasons and my desire for a change, which I cannot have in India, I want to see you and Indira.

I wonder if you saw an article in *The Modern Review* of November last called "The Rashtrapati" by Chanakya.[2] If you have not read it try to get hold of it. It might amuse you or irritate you according to your mood. Anyway it should amuse you when I tell you that I wrote

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See pp. 520-523.

it. The writing of it one evening after dinner amused me considerably. I tried to see myself as an intelligent outsider might perhaps see me. Whether I succeeded or not I do not know. I was also interested in finding out people's reaction to it.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

53. To John Maynard[1]

Allahabad
February 3, 1938

Dear Sir John,[2]
Some little time back Raja Narendra Nath sent me your monograph on collective farming in the U.S.S.R. I have read this with great interest and profit. I think that we, in India, ought to be able to profit greatly by the successes and failures of the Soviet experiment. Many of their failures were due to excessive speed in changing over the old land system. Perhaps at a somewhat lesser tempo we might avoid some of these errors. Yet I feel that a fairly rapid change in our land system is due, especially in the big zamindari areas. It is possible that the next stage might be some form of peasant proprietorship. But I am sure that this will not solve any problem. Only large-scale farms, cooperative or collective, will meet the present requirements of the situation. That again will not touch the unemployment problem for which we must have industrial development as well as the development of social services. All this can only be done on a planned and coordinated basis. Under existing circumstances such planning on a large scale is not possible. And this is the reason why the present system, both political and economic, is collapsing.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Herbert John Maynard (1865-1943); joined Indian Civil Service, 1883; member, executive council of the Governor in the Punjab, 1921-26; author of *Russia In Flux* and *The Russian Peasant and other Studies.*

54. To N. R. Malkani[1]

Allahabad
10-2-38

My dear Malkani,
Forgive me for the delay in thanking you for your letter and for the copy of your article. I have read your article with great interest. I liked your criticism.[2] I am not so thin-skinned as to object to it.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. N.R. Malkani Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. Malkani wrote, "the *Autobiography* is an autobiography only by accident. It reads like a novel and is essentially political history of modern India in which Panditji happens to play an important part ... It is an autobiography with part revealed part concealed vanities of author's life ... whole chapters, almost divisions of his life, seem to be hidden from our view — he is so silent about his personal ambitions, reticent about his attitude to sex, so cautious about the mention of monetary affairs.... The book is not subjective, for I sadly miss the biography of his soul. And Panditji does not even tell me that he had had a friend.... The book is great but not profound... after reading the book I have a feeling that Jawaharlal is like a political Yogi whose thought, word and deed are devoted to the fierce deity of Indian Independence."

55. To Bharati Sarabhai[1]

Khali
March 10, 1938

My dear Bharati,
I was glad to learn from Mridula that you and Leena might also be coming up here. I could not quite make out on the phone when you would be coming. Apparently it was going to be after Mridu. I arrived here today and I like the place. The climate is delightful—not as cold as I thought it would be. It is quiet and an ideal place for me to rest and be about under the pine trees.

I think this place ought to do a deal of good to Mridu and to all of you. There was some talk of your staying in Almora. I think it will

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

be far better for you all to stay at Khali itself. At any rate you should all come up here and spend some time at Khali. Later, if and when you like, you can move to Almora. It is always possible to get furnished houses there. But if you take my advice you will stay at Khali and have a taste of healthy simple life in pleasant surroundings. Ranjit's home will be lying empty most of the time and you can all thus easily stay here. Mridu, I take it, will reach here in five or six days' time. You and Leena should follow soon after and at any rate before I go back, or otherwise Mridu will be left alone when Ranjit and I go down. She won't be alone exactly as there are a number of people in the estate, but the house will be otherwise empty.

Remember that this is not a fashionable or civilized place. So don't bring finery or other unnecessary articles. The thing to do here is to walk, take sun-baths, etc. One can go for good excursions. It will be worthwhile for you all to go for a big excursion to the Pindari glacier which is five or six days' easy march from here.

When you come you might bring a cook with you. You can get a cook here of course but your own man will suit you better. Don't bring many servants. One personal servant is quite enough. There are plenty of people about here and if necessary you can engage local people for odd jobs.

When coming you had better come to us here and we shall fix up a car from Kathgodam. Your luggage can come by lorry. Don't waste time at Kathgodam but start as soon as you can as the journey is a long one. *En route* at Ranikhet you can have your midday meal. We can easily fix that up with some friends. At Almora some people will also meet you but you need not stay there. The car will bring you to within 2-1/2 miles of Khali Hill, ponies will meet you there (at Dina Pani) and you can ride up. The cars available here are not extra good. However they move. Better give good notice for the car to be reserved. I expect I shall be here till the 23rd or 24th.

Love,

Yours,
Jawaharlal

56. To P. V. Gadgil[1]

Khali
March 11, 1938

Dear Gadgil,
Your letter of 21st.[2] I cannot conceive of independence without democracy in India. The two hang together. Therefore we have stated that we want the democratic state in India. The question of expropriation may or may not arise. The proper way to put it is full responsible government in the states and a new land system which ultimately must involve the ending of landlordism. How landlordism will end will depend a great deal on the circumstances existing at the time. Many expediencies have been adopted in the democratic countries in the West. Some of these involve partial compensation, some inflation so as to reduce the burden of debt on the state.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5 (Pt. III)/1938, p. 445, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter, Gadgil had asked whether national democracy should be achieved along with independence or should follow it.

57. To Bhagavan Das[1]

Khali
March 12, 1938

My dear Babu Bhagavan Dasji,
I have come here for a change and I am now endeavouring to reply to some of my accumulated correspondence. Among these is your letter of March 1st.[2] During my absence most of my letters were dealt with by the A.I.C.C. office. I find I have not got the cutting you sent me or the pamphlet. On my return I shall try to find where these are.

When I say, as I have said previously, that all is not right with Russia, this refers to recent developments in the political field. It does not refer

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5 (Pt. III)/1938, p. 373, N.M.M.L.
2. Referring to Jawaharlal's views on Soviet developments, Bhagavan Das suggested that India should achieve material progress without giving up her spiritual heritage.

to the general economic policy of the country. I think that on the economic plane Russia has succeeded remarkably and I believe that a similar economic policy will have to be applied to India as also to the rest of the world. This policy must be based on production for consumption and not for profits and on a tremendous reduction of private ownership. That is to say, I believe in the objective of modern scientific socialism for India. I do not wholly accept the methods adopted in Russia and I think that these methods must fit in not only with present conditions in India but also with what might be called the genius of India. Thus it may be that while we may have different transitional periods, the objectives may be the same.

I agree with you that in considering political and economic problems we have also to consider a certain spiritual background and approach. I use the word 'spiritual' in a non-religious sense.

Briefly put, this is my general outlook.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

58. To John Gunther[1]

Khali
March 16, 1938

Dear Gunther,[2]
It has suddenly struck me that unless I send you answers to your questions from here, when I have some little leisure, I might find it very hard to do so. Even in this remote spot news has trickled in of Hitler's coup[3] in Austria and my mind feels agitated. All the peace and quiet of this place have given place to tension. I do not know what the future will bring, but whatever it is, it will not be peace and quiet. I doubt if you will have much use for the note I am sending you but I want to keep my promise. And so here it goes. It will reach New

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (1901-1970); American journalist and writer; author of many well-known books including *Inside Europe* (1936), *Inside Asia* (1939), *Inside Latin America* (1941), *Riddle of MacArthur* (1951), *Inside Africa* (1955), *Inside Russia Today* (1958), and *Inside South America* (1966).
3. The Nazis invaded Austria on 11 March 1938, and the *anschluss* or union of Austria with Germany was proclaimed.

York long before you do and will wait for you there. A copy is being sent to Hong Kong by air but it is sure to miss you there.

All good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

NOTE

Being an attempt, not altogether successful, to answer the questions put to me.

1. What books do I read? During the last two years I have had little time to read books. But I get a fair number of new and old books and dip into them from time to time. One of my grouses with my present mode of existence is that I do not get the chance to read as much as I want to. My interests in books are fairly catholic. Inevitably I want to read political books and those dealing with present-day problems. My early education has given me a taste for science and I try to keep in some kind of vague touch with scientific developments. History interests me and so does travel, especially old books of travel or modern books dealing with out-of-the-way places—deserts, polar regions, jungles. I read very little fiction, except for a few well-known authors. Poetry has always attracted me and I go to it sometimes for relaxation. I do not feel much at home with some of the modern poets.

I am writing this note in Khali in the Kumaun hills. It might interest you to know what books I have brought with me for my brief stay here. They are:

Aldous Huxley: *Ends and Means*
Bertrand Russell: *Which Way to Peace?*
John Dewey: *The Quest for Certainty*
Edward Thompson: *Life of Lord Metcalfe*
H. Levy: *Philosophy for a Modern Man*
J.R. Firth: *The Tongues of Men* (a book on the development and use of language) and a number of pamphlets, etc.

2. Among the English and American periodicals I have subscribed to regularly for many years are:

The New Statesman
The Manchester Guardian Weekly
Time and Tide

The New York Nation
The New Republic
The Living Age

Other periodicals come and go. I used to get *The Times Literary Supplement* and sometimes the *Literary Digest*, etc., but they have dropped off for lack of time to read them. I should like to get the *Labour Monthly* of London as well as some other leftist periodicals but they are not allowed entry in India. I get the *Tribune* of London. Also *Vendredi* of Paris and *L'Europe*.

A number of foreign periodicals come to our office and I see them occasionally.

3. I have had no time for many years for any other distractions apart from reading and sometimes writing. As a boy I collected postage stamps. I love winter sports but have no chance in India. I used to be fond of riding, and enjoy a swim.

4. I suppose my father and Gandhiji have been the chief personal influences in my life. But outside influences do not carry me away. There is a tendency to resist being influenced. Still they work away slowly and unconsciously. My wife influenced me considerably in many ways, though unobtrusively.

The reading of Karl Marx and Lenin had a powerful effect on me. That effect was partly concerned with the content of what I read. But even more so with the manner of treatment of the subject. I was tired of the mystical and metaphysical approach to life's problems, and the clear, scientific, analytical and unadorned method of treatment and approach appealed to me tremendously. It seemed to resolve many of my doubts and made me understand past history and current events better.

Some years previously I was influenced in the same way by reading Bertrand Russell's books. I like them very much even now but I began to have a feeling of ineffectiveness about them. I appreciated greatly also some of Neibuhr's books.

When I read Spengler I disliked him. And yet I found a certain fascination in his enormous survey of human activity.

5. I am afraid I cannot give any names of my intimate friends. I have a fairly large circle of friends, which includes people in England, France and America. But when it comes to real intimacy the circle narrows down tremendously.

6. I do not quite know what I am. I am certainly a socialist in the sense that I believe in the socialist theory and method of approach. I am not a communist chiefly because I resist the communist tendency to treat communism as holy doctrine and I do not like being told what to think and what to do. I suppose I am too much of an individualist. But my general approach is largely Marxist, though not in a technical sense. For instance I am not frightfully excited about the theory about surplus values. I am not a good enough economist to have a definite opinion about the fine points of communist economic doctrine. I feel also that there is too much violence associated with the communist method and this produces untoward results, as in Russia in recent years. The ends cannot be separated from the means. I realise, of course, that there is quite as much, if not more, violence outside communism, and that the whole of our social structure is based on it. I am not prepared to say that violence must be ruled out but I should like to lessen it as far as possible, and any method which increases it encourages a wrong tendency.

7. My health has been and is good. In prison I had a touch of pleurisy twice and this distressed and troubled me for some months.[5] But I got over it. I suppose there is some remains of it hanging about but my general good health keeps it down.

8. I have had seven terms in prison. Total period of sentences: ten and a half years—longest sentence: 2½ years plus fine. Other sentences varying from 6 months to 2 years, sometimes with brief periods outside. Total period actually spent in prison: 5½ years. This added to jail remissions for good conduct amounts to nearly 7 years. Longest period at a time: a little under two years. On several occasions I was discharged before time. One sentence of 2½ years (in Nabha—an Indian state under a British administrator) was suspended right at the beginning. I suppose it is still suspended.

9. What do I like most? Difficult to say. I like mountains and glaciers very much, and running water in the hills. Yes, I like lettuce salad and good conversation and animals and flowers, and swimming and riding. Perhaps one likes most the things one is deprived of. I had an intense feeling of enjoyment once in prison. This was in the hot weather when the temperature was about 116°F, and for a long time past I had not had a cold drink. My wife sent me a thermos flask filled with iced *sherbet* and I did enjoy that.

5. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 401.

I do not think I care at all for a fight as such. And yet intense activity in the midst of conflict does give me a sense of inner satisfaction. I feel rather at home then.

10. What do I dislike most? I am not strong in my hates. They may be intense enough for a moment but they pass. I do not like bats and centipedes. I feel angry when I see cruelty to human beings or animals. I suppose I am rather soft that way. But what I dislike most, I think, is the person who in the name of God, truth, and the public good is always feathering his own nest. I suppose that would be a fair definition of some politicians at least.

About six months ago I wrote an article[6] about myself. This appeared in the November number of *The Modern Review* of Calcutta. The article was called "The Rashtrapati" and was anonymous. "Rashtrapati" means chief of the state. The title is used for the President of the Congress. At that time there was some talk of my being re-elected President for another year. I was entirely opposed to this and had decided not to stand. It struck me one day to play a little trick. The idea amused me and so I wrote an article about myself and sent it by a devious route to the editor of *The Modern Review*, who did not discover who the author was.

In this article I considered judiciously my virtues and gave praise for them in full measure. But then I went on to say that these very virtues, if misdirected, might bring trouble. It was hinted that in spite of my talk of democracy and socialism, I was the kind of person who might fancy himself as a Caesar. I was not a fascist, it was admitted, and yet I had most of the qualities which might drive me to dictatorship in these times of crisis and change. We had to be on our guard against this and so ultimately the argument went on to say that my conceit should not be encouraged—it was already colossal—and I must, on no account, be elected President of the Congress a fourth time.

I wrote this mainly to watch and enjoy the reactions on others. I am afraid there was a trace of malice in it. I did enjoy these reactions, but soon after I could not keep the secret and told some of my friends.

If I can find this article and I remember to do so, I shall send a copy to you on my return to Allahabad.

6. See pp. 520-523.

59. To Durgabai Jog[1]

Khali
March 22, 1938

Dear Durgabai Jog,[2]
Your letter has reached me here.[3] I am sorry you did not make an attempt to meet me at Haripura. Certainly you can see me in Bombay when I go there next.

It is a little difficult for me to suggest a special programme for you. There are really so many activities which can be undertaken. I think women should take the fullest part in political work. That will give them a greater status in India than any other thing else. But apart from this, women should also work for the removal of all disabilities from which their sex suffers.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5 (Pt. II)/1938, p. 213, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1899); joined civil disobedience movement, 1930, and was imprisoned many times.
3. She sought Jawaharlal's advice about the work which women could take up in addition to social service and spinning.

60. To Riaz Mohamad[1]

Khali
March 22, 1938

Dear Mr. Riaz Mohamad,[2]
Your letter of the 14th has reached me here. I should be very glad to help you to find suitable work in the national cause. But the suggestion that you make that I should make you my secretary is difficult for me to adopt. My method of work is such that I have to keep the fewest possible persons near me. Otherwise my work suffers. It is not my intention to have any more assistants with me than I have at present. I have numerous requests of the kind that you have made, both from

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5 (Pt. II)/1938, p. 219, N.M.M.L.
2. A railway employee at Ajmer.

Muslims and Hindus and Parsis and others. But I cannot change my habits and method of work.

Regarding your future work, perhaps you can communicate with Dr. Ashraf of the A.I.C.C. office and see if he has any suggestion to make.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

61. Escape[1]

The Haripura Congress was over. The wonder city of bamboo that had risen on the banks of the Tapti was looking deserted. Only a day or two before, its streets had been full of an animated jostling crowd, grave and gay, talking, discussing, laughing, and feeling that they were taking part in the shaping of India's destiny. But those scores of thousands had suddenly departed for their distant homes and a sense of emptiness hung in the still air. Even the duststorm had abated. Having a little leisure for the first time since I came, I wandered by the Tapti bank and, in the darkness of the approaching night, went up to the edge of the flowing water. I felt a little sad when I thought that this magnificent city and camp, that had risen over the fields and waste lands, would vanish soon, leaving hardly a trace behind. Only the memory would endure.

But the sadness passed, and the desire that I had long nursed, the wish to go away to some far-off place, became strong and possessed me. It was not physical tiredness, but a weariness of the mind which hungered for change and refreshment. Political life was an exhausting business and I had had enough of it for a while. Long habit and routine held me fast but distaste for this daily round grew, and while I answered questions and spoke as amiably as I could to comrades and friends, my mind was elsewhere. It was wandering over the mountains of the north with their deep valleys and snowy peaks, and precipices and gentle slopes covered by pine-trees and deodars. It panted for escape from the troubles and problems that encompassed us, for peace and quiet and the gentle sigh of the wind.

1. Allahabad, 7 April 1938. *The Modern Review*, May 1938. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 200-204.

At last I was going to have my way, to pander to my secret and long-cherished desire. How could I trouble myself with ministries coming or going, or the melting-pot of international affairs, when the door of escape lay open before me?

I hastened north to my city of Allahabad and found to my dismay that some trouble was brewing. I grew irritated and angry with myself. Was I going to be thwarted and prevented from going to the mountains because fools and bigots wanted to create communal trouble? I reasoned with myself and said that nothing much could happen, the situation would improve and there were plenty of sensible people about. So I argued with and deluded myself, possessed by the desire to go away and escape. Like a coward I crept away when my work lay in Allahabad.

But soon I had forgotten Allahabad and its troubles and even the problems of India receded into some corner of my brain. The intoxication of the mountain air filled me as we climbed up the winding road to Almora in the Kumaun hills. From Almora we went further up to Khali, riding on sturdy hill ponies for the last part of our journey.

I was in Khali where I had longed to go for the past two years, and it was pleasant to be there.[2] The sun was setting and there was a glow on the hill-sides and a hush in the valleys. My eyes searched for Nanda Devi and her companion peaks of the snowy range, but they were hidden by light clouds.

Day succeeded day and I drank deep of the mountain air and took my fill of the sight of the snows and the valleys. How beautiful and full of peace they were, and the world's ills seemed far away and unreal. Towards the west and the south-east deep valleys, two or three thousand feet below us, curved away into the distance. Towards the north towered Nanda Devi and her white-clad companions. Fierce precipices, almost straight cut, sometimes led to the depths below, but more often the curves of the hill-sides were soft and rounded, like a woman's breast. Or they would be cut up in terraces where green fields witnessed to the industry of man.

In the early morning I lay bare-bodied in the open and the gentle-eyed sun of the mountains took me into his warm embrace. The cold wind from the snows made me shiver a little, but the sun would come to my rescue and fill me with warmth and well-being.

Sometimes I would lie under the pine-trees and listen to the voice of the wandering wind, whispering many strange things into my ears, and

2. Jawaharlal stayed at Khali (Almora) from 10 March to 26 March 1938.

lulling my senses, and cooling the fever in my brain. Finding me unguarded and open to attack, it would cunningly point out the folly of men's ways in the world below, their unceasing strife, their passions and hatred, their bigotry in the name of religion, the corruption of their politics, the degradation of their ideals. Was it worthwhile going back to them and wasting one's life's effort in dealings with them? Here there was peace and quiet and well-being, and for companions we had the snows and the mountains and the hill-sides covered with a multitude and a variety of trees and flowers, and the singing of birds. So whispered the wind, softly and cunningly, and in the enchantment of the spring day I allowed her to whisper.

It was early spring still in the mountains, though down below summer was already peeping in. On the hill-sides the rhododendron flowers made bright red patches which could be seen from afar. The fruit trees were full of bloom, and millions of tiny leaves were on the point of coming out to cover with their fresh and tender and green beauty the nakedness of many of the trees.

Four miles from Khali, fifteen hundred feet higher up, lay Binsar. We went there and saw a sight which we can never forget. Stretched out in front of us was a six-hundred-mile stretch of the Himalayan snowy range, from the mountains of Tibet to those of Nepal, and in the centre towered Nanda Devi. There was Badrinath and Kedarnath and many another famous place in that wide expanse, and just across them lay Kailas and Manasarovar. What a magnificent sight that was, and I gazed at it spell-bound, awe-stricken with the majesty of it. And I grew a little angry with myself when I thought that I had missed this overwhelming beauty, in a corner of my own province, all these long years, though I had wandered all over India and visited many distant countries. How many people in India had seen it or even heard of it? How many of the tens of thousands who visit annually the cheap and tawdry hill stations in search of jazz and bridge?

So the days passed and contentment grew in my mind, but also a fear that my brief holiday would soon end. Sometimes a huge bundle of letters and newspapers would come and I viewed them with distaste. The post office was ten miles away and I was half inclined to let my mail rest there, but old habit was too strong and the possibility of finding a letter from some dear one far away made me open the door to these unwelcome intruders from outside.

Suddenly there came a rude shock. Hitler was marching into Austria and I heard the tramp of barbarian feet over the pleasant gardens of Vienna. Was this the prelude to that world catastrophe which had hung over us for so long? Was this war? I forgot Khali and the snows

and the mountains and my body became taut and my mind tense. What was I doing here, in a remote corner of the mountains, when the world was on the brink and evil triumphed and had to be countered and checked? Yet what could I do?

Another shock came—communal riots in Allahabad, many heads broken and a few persons killed. A few men dead or alive did not matter much, but what was this disgusting madness and folly that degraded our people from time to time?

There was no peace for me then even in Khali, no escape. How could I escape from the thoughts that tormented my mind, how could I run away from my trembling heart? I realised that we had to face the world's passions and endure the world's anguish, dreaming sometimes, it may be, of the world's deliverance. Was this dream just a phantasy of the dreamer's mind or was it something more? Will it ever take shape?

For a few days more I stayed on in Khali, but a vague disquiet filled my mind. Slowly a measure of peace returned to me as I gazed at those white mountains, calm and inscrutable and untouched by human folly. They would remain there whatever man did, and even if the present generation committed suicide or went into oblivion by some slower process, the spring would still come to the hill-sides, and the wind will rustle through the pine-trees, and the birds will sing.

But meanwhile there was no escape, whatever of good or ill the future might hold. There was no escape except to some extent in action. No Khali could smother the mind or drug the heart into forgetfulness. And so to Khali I bade good-bye, sixteen days after I had come there, and wistfully I took my last long look at the white peaks of the north and imprinted their noble outline on the canvas of my mind.

62. Prison Days[1]

For many months I have had the manuscript of these poems with me, a constant reminder to me of my promise to write a few lines as a foreword. And yet I have found it strangely difficult to write this foreword, although I have done a great deal of writing on all manner of subjects during this period. I am no judge or critic of poetry and so I

1. Jawaharlal wrote this foreword in April 1938 to a book *Prison Days and other Poems* by S.H. Vatsyayan, published in September 1946.

hesitated, but I love poetry and some of these little poems have appealed to me greatly. They have stuck in my mind and brought back to me memories of prison days and that strange and haunted world where men, whom society had branded as criminals and cast out of its pale, lived their narrow circumscribed lives. There were men there who had been involved in a killing, men known as dacoits and thieves; but all of us were bound together in that sorrow-laden world of prison, between us there existed a kinship of spirit. In the lonely chambers which were our cells we walked up and down, five measured paces this way, and five measured paces back, and communed with sorrow. We found friendship and companionship and refuge in thought and on the magic carpet of fantasy we fled away from our surroundings. We lived double lives—the life of the prison, ordered and circumscribed, bolted and barred, and the free life of the spirit, with its dreams and visions, hopes and desires.

Something of that dreaming comes out in these poems, something of that yearning when the arms stretched out in search for what was not and clutched at empty space. Something also of the peace and contentment that we managed to extract even in our loneliness in that house of sorrow. There was always a tomorrow to hope for, a tomorrow which might bring deliverance.

And so I commend these poems and perhaps they might move others as they have moved me.

63. To Krishna Hutheesing[1]

Srinagar (Garhwal)
5.5.38

Betty darling,

I sent you a telegram from Lucknow asking you to reserve a berth for me in a cabin where I would have no companion. I do not like the idea of having someone sharing my cabin. I can put up with most discomforts but privacy is something I treasure.

We have had three days of the Garhwal tour and we have enjoyed them.[2] They have been unusual. First the aeroplane trip from Hardwar to Badrinath and Kedarnath and back to Hardwar. Then the same

1. *Nehru's Letters to His Sister*, (London, 1963), pp. 58-59.
2. See the succeeding item.

day by car 58 miles to Devaprayag following the Ganga in its upper reaches. At Devaprayag the Ganga splits up into the Bhagirathi, which comes from Gangotri, and the Alaknanda, which has its sources in the glaciers of Badrinath and Kedarnath. The two join at Devaprayag and there we spent this night. The next morning we took to horses and rode about 20 miles to Srinagar (Garhwal) following the Alaknanda all the way.

The air journey was good though bumpy. Nan did not exactly enjoy it as she was violently sick most of the way. But it was a delightful sight to see the Ganga in its youthful exuberant stage winding and gurgling through the valleys. We approached the snows and hovered over Badrinath and Kedarnath and saw the snowy peaks looming in front. Badrinath was particularly grand.

We have been here since yesterday noon. Srinagar is situated in a broad and pleasant valley with the Alaknanda running through it. It is a small unpretentious little town, though in olden times it was the capital of the Garhwali kingdom. Now it is cut off almost from the rest of the world by the lack of even a carriage road. Such a site in Europe would be jumped upon and a beautiful town would grow up with villas all over the hill-sides and a brightly-lit city.

We have had several functions. This evening there was to be a conference but heavy rain came down just as I started speaking. The awning had previously blown away. We carried on in spite of the rain and I held forth for about 45 minutes. There was a large crowd of women present and they stood the rain bravely getting quite soaked.

Tomorrow noon we go to Pauri, a hill station about 8 miles away. We spend the night there and then go back to Devaprayag and Hardwar. Thus ends our Garhwal trip. After two days in Allahabad, I shall go to Bombay. But on the way I shall spend half a day at Kareli in the C.P. I expect to reach Bombay on the 12th morning by mail. Raja will probably reach there on the 11th evening. He intends leaving Allahabad with me on the 10th evening by express but he will not stop at Kareli.

Love,

Your loving brother,
Jawahar

64. A Visit to Garhwal[1]

My sister Vijayalakshmi and I have just spent five days in Garhwal. During these many years I have travelled a good deal in India and I have visited every district of the United Provinces, often more than once. But Garhwal remained unvisited except for a few hours given to Dugadda a year and a half ago. I was eager to fill this gap and, as always, the mountains attracted me. But the lack of communications necessitated a longer period and so I hesitated. But the insistence of friends in Garhwal and the consciousness of my own failure in the past induced me at last to repair this omission and to find a few days for these mountain valleys. I was happy to have as companions Vijayalakshmi and Raja Hutheesing as well as comrades from Garhwal.

It was a delightful visit, though a strenuous one, and we have returned somewhat stiff of body but with our minds full of pleasant memories. We visited Gochar, Devaprayag, Srinagar and Pauri and many villages on the way. Our journeying was done by aeroplane, by car, on horseback and on foot, riding being the principal means adopted owing to the lack of cart roads. The aeroplane took us all the way to Badrinath and Kedarnath and we had a near view of the snowy peaks which dominate these ancient places of pilgrimage. We could not land there and had to come back some way to Gochar where we landed. A great welcome awaited us there from the mountain folk and then we returned having completed by air within five hours a journey that takes as many weeks on foot. From the air we saw Garhwal spread out below us with its bare mountains and its numerous valleys with rivers winding through them. We were in the land of birth of the Ganga and this noble river, which we had known and loved so well in its rich and stately maturity, appeared before us now in its eager and joyful youth and its bubbling and gurgling childhood.

Having done with the air journey we took to the road and followed the Ganga from Rishikesh to Devaprayag where the Bhagirathi meets the Alaknanda and joining together drop their own particular names and become the Ganga, the river that has held India's heart captive for so many thousands of years. Perched up on precipices between the two rivers and across them, sits the little town of Devaprayag, looking down on the swiftly-flowing currents as they rush through rock-hewn gorges to meet and intermingle in a warm embrace.

1. Allahabad 10 May 1938. *The Tribune,* 13 May 1938. Reprinted in *The Unity of India,* (London, 1941), pp. 205-212.

We reached Srinagar, situated in a broad and pleasant valley. The Alaknanda flowed swiftly by it, carrying timber from its upper reaches. The town was a small one, fallen greatly from its old estate when it was the capital of the Garhwali kingdom. Here we stayed for two days and took part in the conference that was being held there and met many old comrades.[2] We then proceeded to Pauri on the hill-top which gazes at the magnificent range of the northern snows. Badrinath and Kedarnath, the Chaukhamba and Trishul and even Nanda Devi. All along the route we were met by the people from the villages, men and women and children, and warm-hearted affection came to greet us.

A busy programme in Pauri and a night there, and then a long and weary ride by a little frequented and badly kept route to Devaprayag, with halts and meetings on the way. From Devaprayag to Hardwar and back to railway train.

The abiding impression of Garhwal was one of isolation and poverty. It was extraordinary how near we were to the rest of the world and yet how cut off from it. Twenty miles represented now a hard day's journeying, as it must have been a thousand years ago or more. During these ages that had gone by there had hardly been any improvement in communications and journeys were on foot or rarely on horseback. Only the telegraph wire spoke to us of science and the modern world. The lack of cart roads throughout this wide-flung district is astonishing and for half a century there has been an insistent demand, ever growing louder, for a good road. We had heard of this before but we had not realized the passion behind it. Everywhere all sorts of people demanded and begged and shouted for a road. Everything else was secondary to them and Swaraj itself took the semblance of a road leading from the heart of the mountains to the plains below. They told us that it was a matter of life and death for them. 'Give us a road or we die', they pleaded.

Why has this road-making been delayed so long in Garhwal? It was expensive, of course, but equally expensive roads have been made all over India in mountainous regions. During the period of the World War the people of Garhwal were soothed by promises of a railway and a survey at a cost of many lakhs of rupees was actually made. But neither the railway nor a road materialised. If there had been a regiment stationed in Garhwal or any considerable British official population, a road would have appeared soon enough. But officials do not look with favour on a sojourn in Garhwal and consider it as a kind of exile. Even inspections by high officials seldom take place there. Still the road would have

2. Jawaharlal attended the district political conference at Srinagar on 5-6 May 1938.

come if there had not been some definite objection to it on the part of the British Government. I imagine this objection was based on the desire on the part of the government to keep Garhwal isolated and immune from political influences, as it was one of their chief recruiting areas. Garhwal regiments are well known, but I was surprised to learn that thousands of people from the district served in the armed police in Bengal. They are terribly poor and the land cannot sustain them in its present condition; they have hardly any industries, and so inevitably they seek employment elsewhere.

We met large numbers of school children and I liked to ask them many questions. I found that over ninety per cent of them had never seen a railway train, or a motor car, or even a carriage. But they had seen an aeroplane flying over them; only some days before we had ourselves flown across.

Garhwal must have a road and that soon. It will never progress without it. But a road is not enough and what is urgently needed is to improve the productive capacity of the people. Apart from the question of the road the chief complaints were the lack of water, the heavy assessment, and the lack of medical help and schools. If a person fell seriously ill, it was not even possible to carry him to some hospital nearby. He simply died or, if he was lucky, survived. The demand for education was great, even for girls, but the schools were few and far between.

The lack of water for the fields seemed strange, for there were several rivers with plenty of it and occasional springs. And yet fields in the river valleys were lying dry and elsewhere they were worse off. We saw large numbers of terraced fields which had been cut out of the hill-sides with enormous labour, lying desolate and untended. They had been allowed to run waste as it was not considered worthwhile to cultivate them. Partly this problem of water has been aggravated by the lack of forests and the general barrenness of the hill-sides. Why Garhwal has such few forests while Kumaun abounds in them I do not know. The soil is as good and other conditions appear equally favourable.

Yet with all its poverty and barrenness, Garhwal gave us the idea of great potential strength and resources. There was water power running to waste everywhere when it could be converted into electricity and life-giving power for fields and industries. Probably there were plenty of minerals in that vast area only waiting to be developed.

Let the road come to Garhwal. But equally urgent is an inquiry into its power resources and minerals. These power resources could supply electric power not only to Garhwal but to a large part of the province. Thus two expert inquiries seem called for immediately—one for the

utilization of water power and the building up of hydro-electric schemes, and the other into the mineral resources of the area.

While these schemes develop, it may be possible to put up inexpensive pumps to send up the river water to the fields above. A scheme for afforestation should also be inquired into and begun.

Probably there are considerable opportunities for the development of cottage industries in Garhwal. Of these wool-spinning and weaving are the most obvious and they can be easily developed. An attempt to do so in Kumaun is meeting with success and there is every reason to believe that it will meet with equal success in Garhwal.

Bee-keeping is common in Garhwal but the methods adopted are primitive and wasteful. These could be easily improved.

I must confess that I found a certain lack of enterprise among the people of Garhwal. They seemed to be resigned to their sad fate and their only reaction to it was to ask others to do something for them. They seldom thought in terms of doing something themselves. This was a natural outcome of long and distressing poverty and suppression and it will pass. For the Garhwalis are a brave and sturdy people and, given the chance, they will make good. They have become dear to India for the gallant deed they performed eight years ago in the North West Frontier Province, when civil disobedience raged throughout India and the blood in our veins tingled as we took our part, big or small, in the struggle for freedom.

GLOSSARY

Bahisht	paradise
Biradari	community
Chalbazi	trickery
Gaddies	seats of power
Khadem	a servant
Kutchery	law court
Mandal	board
Pattedars	leaseholders
Qasbas	small towns
Sahukars	bankers
Swayam sewak	a volunteer
Tamasha	amusement

INDEX

(Biographical footnotes are italicized)

Abbasid dynasty, 474 fn
Abdus Sami, 191 fn
Abyssinia—see Ethiopia
Acropolis (Athens), 788
Addis Ababa, 707
Aden, 782
Afghanistan, 622, 630
Aga Khan, 722 fn
Agra, 19 fn
Ahmad, Maulana Husain, 147, 149, 153, 154, 158, 160, 166, 170
————, Maulvi Bashir, 154 & *fn*
————, Said, 149 & fn, 154
————, Z.A., 759 fn, 824 & fn, 861
Ahmedabad, 508-511
Ahmed Din, Munshi, 770 & *fn*
Ahmed, Rafiuddin, 136 & fn, 159 fn, 162, 163, 171, 172, 173 & fn, 177
Ahmednagar (Ahmadnagar), 308 fn
Ahrar Party, 120
Aiyar, K. Natesa, 649 fn
Ajmer, 533-536, 619, 872 fn
Akyab, 678
Albert Hall (London), 701 fn, 705
Alexander, 520 fn
Alexander, Horace, 86, 588, 704
Ali, Ahmad, 198
————, Asaf, 589, 590 fn, 612
————, Maulana Mohamed, 119, 201, 205, 238
————, Sadiq, 138, 140, 146
————, Shaukat, 125 fn, 133, 160 & fn, 179, 195, 201, 238
Aligarh, 178 & fn, 191 & fn, 196, 199 fn, 213, 372
Aligarh Muslim University, 168 fn, 178 fn, 196, 213, 822
Aligarh Muslim University Union, 196 fn
Aljamiat, 154, 157, 183
Allahabad, 2, 3, 15, 16 fn, 23, 28, 104, 133 & fn, 138, 139 fn, 140, 144, 146, 149, 154, 155, 158, 170, 176, 177, 179, 191, 211, 212, 214, 216, 217, 229 & fn, 231 fn, 232, 235, 241, 242, 245, 269, 307 fn, 334, 335, 358, 360, 361, 376, 378, 387, 409, 508, 519, 539, 555, 558, 569, 573, 574 & fn, 580, 619, 632, 712, 727, 736 fn, 777-780, 791-793, 795, 797, 799, 803, 823 fn, 851, 871, 874, 876, 878
Allahabad Swadeshi League, 404
Allahabad University, 856 fn
Allied Control Commission (Germany), 845 fn
All India Congress Committee, 16, 28 & fn, 30, 33, 47, 49, 51, 52, 57, 61, 65, 69, 71, 74 & fn, 80, 81, 95, 99, 100, 105, 106, 114, 117, 123, 183, 188, 189, 191, 193 fn, 287, 296, 325, 335, 338, 339, 342, 344, 346-348, 355 & fn, 360, 361, 368, 371, 378, 397 fn, 401, 402, 407, 427, 445, 447, 448, 453, 506, 538 & fn, 546, 561, 562, 565-578 fn, 580, 712, 726 & fn, 731, 744, 751, 757, 763, 763 fn, 768, 769, 779 fn, 780, 866, 873
All India Convention of Congress Legislators, 33, 59 fn, 72, 287, 296, 411
All India Harijan Sewak Sangh, 498
All India Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 791 fn
All India Kisan Sabha. 112 fn, 408 fn

All India Muslim Students Federation, 207 fn, 210, 215 fn
All India Nationalist Muslim Party, 128 & fn
All India Radio, 845 fn
All India Shia Political Conference, 190 & fn, 720 fn
All India Spinners Association, 692
All India States People's Conference 761
All India Students Federation, 178 fn
All India Trade Union Congress, 22 23 & fn
Almora, 380, 381, 781, 785, 864, 865, 874, & fn
Aluwihare, Bernard, 649, 650
Alwar, 537
Ambernath (Bombay), 257
American Civil Liberties Union, 732 fn
Amrita Bazar Patrika, 97 fn, 415 fn
Amritsar, 13 fn, 403 fn
Ananda Bazar Patrika, 415 fn, 416
Anand Math (B.C. Chatterji), 187, 435 fn
Andaman Day, 267 fn, 299
Andaman islands, 272, 274 fn, 289, 299, 313, 590, 591, 593, 594 & fn, 613, 614, 632 fn
Andhra Congress Socialist Party, 100 fn
Andhra Provincial Ryots Association, 36 fn
Andhra Youth League, 100 fn
Andrews, C.F., 803, 848
Andrew Yule & Co. Ltd., 448 fn
Anglo-Italian Agreement, 739 fn
Anjuman-e-Tarraqqi-e-Urdu, 214
Ankara, 640
Ansari, Farid-ul-Haq, 463
————, M.A., 56, 405
Anti-Constitution Day, 12
Anti-Separation League, 660 fn
Arab Higher Committee, 466 & fn
Arjun, 463 fn
Ashraf, K.M., 133, 134, 138, 139, 146, 195, 196 fn, 455, 873
Asia in the Twentieth Century (F. Whyte), 623 fn
Asoka, 474, 621
Assam, 360, 361, 365, 372, 377
Assam Oil Company, 488 & fn, 499
Atal, Madan, 641 fn, 676 fn, 712, 781, 784, 785
Athens, 788, 789
Australia, 664, 753
Austria, 228 & fn, 739 & fn, 867 & fn, 875
Autobiography (J. Nehru), 96 fn, 97 fn, 856, 864 fn
Avadh (Oudh), 19 fn, 393 fn
Azad, Maulana A.K., 14 fn, 77, 78, 138, 140, 148, 149, 153-155, 159, 168, 170, 171, 182, 216, 223, 387
Azad Pakistan Party, 176 fn
Azikiwe, Nnamdi, 737 & *fn*

Badminton School (England), 800 fn
Badrinath, 389, 802, 803, 875, 877, 878, 880
Baghdad, 474
Baghelkhand, 580 fn
Baker, Miss, 800 & fn
Ballia, 5
Balu, A.M., 175 & fn
Baluchistan, 238
Ba Maw, 660 & *fn*, 661
Banaras, 829
Banaras Hindu University, 213
Banda, 136 fn, 145 & fn
Banerji, Purnima, 229
Bangalore, 548, 549, 565 fn, 568 fn, 576 fn
Bangladesh, 269 fn, 270 fn, 414 fn
Banker, Shankerlal, 406
Bannu, 461, 462
Bara Banki, 191
Baramandir, 543
Barcelona, 704, 739 fn
Bardoloi, Gopinath, 283 & *fn*, 489
Bareilly, 803
Barisal, 414 fn, 435 fn
Barnes, J., 849 & fn
Basque, 457
Basti, 195 & fn, 199 fn
Batavia, 789
Batliwala, S.S., 360 & *fn*
Bazmi, A.S., 539 & fn

B.C. Roy Memorial Library and Reading Room, 846 fn
Beggar my Neighbour (L. Fielden), 845 fn
Behari, Maulana Nuruddin, 159 & *fn*
Behat (Saharanpur), 198, 199
Bengal Nagpur Railway, 252 & fn
Bengal Tenancy Bill, 270 & fn
Benton, William B., 88 & *fn*
Berlin, 783, 784
Between the Thunder and the Sun (V. Sheean), 792 fn
Bevan, Aneurin, 34 fn
Bex, 793, 794, 800
Bhagavan Das, 635 & fn, 637 & fn, 866 & fn
Bhargava, Gopichand, 13, 146, 260, 264, 402, 444 & fn
Bhashyam, K., 364 & *fn*
Bhopal, 540, 541
Bhopal State People's Association, 539 fn, 540
Bhowali, 785
Bijnor, 20, 191 fn, 194, 195, 274, 340, 519, 539 fn, 540
Bijolia, 535 fn
Bikaner, 542-544
Bikaner conspiracy case, 544 fn
Bilbao, 712 & fn
Binsar, 875
Bombay, 1 fn, 27 fn, 28, 100, 103, 124 fn, 152 fn, 170, 171, 173, 177, 237, 239, 245, 257, 278 & fn-280, 296, 316, 322, 328, 330, 353, 356 & fn, 360 fn, 365, 372, 389 & fn, 409, 433, 478, 539, 555, 565, 595 fn, 616, 617, 635 fn, 638, 641 fn, 713 fn, 720 fn, 723, 781, 782, 785, 793, 796, 801, 803, 853, 857 fn, 872, 878
Bombay Chronicle, 18, 148
Bombay Sentinel, 433
Borneo, 625
Bose, Sarat Chandra, 188, 189, 407, 481
————, Subhas Chandra, 104, 186, 223, 378 & fn, 407 fn, 408 fn, 449, 458, 516, 634, 774, 862
Brabourne, Lord, 80 fn
Brailsford, H.N., 87
Bristol, 801
British Commonwealth of Nations, 65 & fn, 597
Brittain, Vera, 796 & *fn*
Bulandshahr, 360
Bundelkhand, 135, 138-142, 144, 154, 159, 165, 167, 168, 170-172, 177, 192, 195
Burdwan, maharaja of, 7 & fn
Burma, 43, 85, 88, 90, 91, 101, 104, 256 & fn, 412, 417, 588, 646, 648, 664, 671, 674, 764 & fn, 765
Burma Oil Company, 488 fn, 499, 660
Butler, R.A., 95 fn

Caesar, 521, 522
Calcutta, 40, 93, 100, 104, 119 fn, 179 fn, 187, 189, 193 & fn, 207 fn, 210, 212 & fn, 214, 215 fn, 216, 222 fn, 232, 236 fn, 240, 252 & fn, 273, 341, 344, 347, 348, 355 & fn, 380 fn, 406, 409, 448 & fn, 481, 499, 519, 520 fn, 538 fn, 561, 571, 573 fn, 660, 678, 723, 726 fn, 763, 768, 789, 801, 802, 806, 828, 841, 871
————, Congress session at, 761
Calcutta University, 382, 406 fn
Cambridge, 448 fn, 711 fn, 806 & fn, 821
Campbellpore, 112 fn
Canada, 664, 826
Canadian Youth Congress, 826 & fn
Cape Comorin—see Kanyakumari
Catalonia, 739 fn
Caveeshar, Sardul Singh, 202
Cawnpore—see Kanpur
Cawnpore Cotton Mills, 353
Ceylon—see Sri Lanka
Chakravarty, Raj Kumar, 425 & *fn*
Chaman Lal, Dewan, 180, 182, 184 & fn, 264 & fn
Chamberlain, Neville, 111 & *fn*
Chanakya, 520 & fn, 862
Chanda, Anil, 802
Chandanmal, 544 & fn
Chandernagore, 263
Chandragupta, Maurya, 520 fn

Chapra, 851
Chatterji, Ramananda, 525
Chattopadhyaya, Kamaladevi, 548, 760 fn, 791
Chaukhamba, 880
Chettiar, M.G. Natesa, 320 & fn
———, P.T., 675 fn
Children's Book Trust, 846 fn
Children's World, 846 fn
China, 229, 275, 295, 296, 327, 370, 466, 589, 607, 612, 617-619, 622, 630, 641, 664, 673, 753, 754, 756, 801, 817, 820
China and Foreign Powers (F. Whyte), 623 fn
China Relief Fund, 734
Chinese Millions (A.L. Strong), 793 fn
Chittagong, 255 fn, 263, 276 fn, 678
Chota Nagpur, 5
Chowdhury, Amulya Charan, 276 fn
Christ Church College (Kanpur), 825
Chu Teh, Marshal, 733 & *fn*
Cochin State Congress, 530
Colombo, 29
Columbia, 615
Columbia University, 406 fn
Comilla, 270 fn
Communal Award, 7 & fn, 8, 131, 151, 193, 208, 214, 225, 226, 233-235
Communist Party (India), 41 fn, 112 fn, 158 fn, 408 fn, 507 fn, 529 fn, 632 fn
Congress Central Parliamentary Board, 1, 9 fn
Congress election manifesto, 15 & fn, 47, 58, 64, 80, 126, 349
Congress Hospital (Allahabad), 777, 778, 780
Congress, Indian National, 1-28 & fn, 30-33, 36 fn-40, 42, 47-57, 67-71, 73-77, 80 & fn, 82-85, 87, 90 & fn, 92 & fn, 94-99, 100 fn, 102, 104 fn, 105 fn-107, 109-116, 119-133, 136-138 fn, 140, 150-152 & fn, 153 fn, 156-158, 160, 164-167, 171-178, 180-183, 185, 186 fn, 187-197, 200-205, 207-209, 211 & fn, 213-224, 226 & fn, 227, 229-240, 244, 246, 250, 252-254, 256, 258, 261-271, 273-304, 307-320, 322-333, 335-337 & fn, 339-352, 355-360, 362, 363, 365-368, 370-371, 373-375, 378-380, 381 fn, 383-394, 397-399, 401-404, 406 & fn, 408 & fn, 410-417, 426-439, 441-450, 452-455, 458, 459, 461-467, 469, 471, 472, 474-477, 482-486, 489-494, 498, 500, 502, 505-508, 510 fn, 515, 516, 520 fn, 521, 523, 529-536, 538-541, 547, 548, 550, 551, 553 fn-560, 562, 564, 567-569, 571, 573 fn-576, 578-581, 585, 587, 589, 590, 593-595, 597, 600 & fn, 601, 605, 607, 611, 612, 614, 615, 618, 619, 626, 629, 633, 635 fn, 637, 640, 651, 653, 654, 657, 662-664, 669, 670, 674, 702, 712, 715, 718, 723, 729, 744, 746, 751, 755-766, 768-771, 773, 779 fn, 790, 796, 804, 811, 822, 831
———, session at Calcutta, 761
———, session at Faizpur, 3, 28 fn, 43, 50 & fn, 99, 271, 281, 287, 289, 296, 397, 399, 431, 458 fn, 702 fn, 724, 766, 804
———, session at Haripura, 378 fn, 379 fn, 391 & fn, 450, 452 & fn, 516, 633, 634, 640, 740 & fn, 746, 759 fn, 764 fn, 765 fn, 826, 873
———, session at Karachi, 126, 234, 412, 601, 602, 768 fn
———, session at Lahore, 587
———, session at Lucknow, 202, 218, 530, 618 fn, 765, 766
———, session at Nagpur, 600 fn
Congress Nationalist Party, 13 & fn, 33 fn, 164, 271
Congress Party, 69 fn, 76 fn, 114, 270, 428, 431-441, 443 fn, 448, 449, 485, 489, 589 fn, 676, 858
Congress Socialist, 294 & fn
Congress Socialist Party, 40, 229 fn, 319 fn, 328, 410, 437, 507 fn, 529 fn, 856 fn
Congress Working Committee, 1 & fn, 14 & fn, 28, 52 & fn, 53, 55, 57, 59, 67, 73 & fn, 74, 77, 78, 86, 91, 95 & fn, 96, 100, 103, 105-111, 116, 164, 168, 170, 186, 188, 204, 214,

223, 236 & fn, 237, 246, 267, 272, 278 & fn, 280, 286-288, 290, 292, 295, 300, 304, 305, 315, 325, 326, 338, 341, 342, 344, 346, 347, 355 fn-357, 361, 362, 365, 368 & fn, 377, 378, 381 & fn, 389, 401, 407 & fn, 409-411, 426 fn-428, 432, 439, 443, 446-449, 453, 477, 484, 486, 521, 529, 538 fn, 550, 560, 578, 612, 635 fn, 636 fn, 640 fn, 641 & fn, 696, 715, 718, 721, 740, 759, 760, 762 fn, 763, 768-771, 774, 779 & fn, 791, 792, 796, 811, 812, 862
Conservative Association (Oxford University), 99
Conservative Party (British), 131
Cornwall, 800
Criminal Tribes Act, 290 & fn
Cripps, Sir Stafford, 29, 31 & fn, 34 fn, 90 & fn, 293, 633, 635
Crozier, W.P., 88 & *fn*
Cushman, James, 736 & fn

Da Cruz, Carlos, 857 & fn
Dain, J.R., 640 fn
Dalhousie, 104, 409
Dange, S.A., 22 fn
Dar, Mohammad Yamin, 258 & fn
Dasappa, H. C., 578 & *fn*, 579
Datta, S.K., 782
————, Mrs. S.K., 782
D.A.V. College (Kanpur), 813, 814
Deccan States People's Conference, 530
Dehra Dun, 10, 12 fn
Delang, 578
Delhi, 8 fn, 28 & fn, 56, 57, 71, 74, 76, 86, 90, 154, 157, 158, 159 fn, 164, 166, 183, 196, 205, 213, 224, 242, 254, 278, 300, 338, 401, 405, 411, 463 & fn, 519, 632, 791, 801, 829, 846
Deoband, 136 fn, 158
Deo, Shankarrao, 14 fn, 100
Desai, Bhulabhai, 14 fn, 617, 618, 719, 759 fn, 858
————, Hari Prasad, 510 & fn
————, Mahadeva, 372, 387, 476, 569 fn, 636 fn
Deshpande, G.B., 100
Deutsches Museum (Munich), 812
Devaprayag, 878, 879
Devils Island, 591 fn
Dewey, John, 732 & *fn*, 868
Dhampur (Bijnor), 20
Dhubri, 253, 257, 483, 498
Dhulekar, R.V., 139, 145, 146
Dibrugarh, 221 fn
Digboi, 499
Dina Pani (Almora), 865
Disraeli, Benjamin, 680 & *fn*
Dolivet, M., 726
Dollfuss, E., 783 fn
Douglas, Major, 130
Doulatram, Jairamdas, 399 fn
Dubash, Durgashankar, 771 & fn
Duchene, G., 739 & fn
Dugadda (Garhwal), 802
Dukhia, Balwant Singh, 267 fn
Dutt, B.K., 632
Dwarka, 624
Dyer, General, 13

Edinburg University, 80 fn
Edward VIII, 416 & fn, 805
Egypt, 143, 639, 799
Einstein, Albert, 732
Elgin Mills (Kanpur), 353
Ellore, 507 fn
Ends and Means (A. Huxley), 868
England, 18, 24, 30, 31 & fn, 65, 86, 87, 89, 97, 101, 264, 275, 327, 332, 338, 377, 415, 459, 466, 478, 514, 525, 534, 586, 587, 614 fn, 622, 634, 635, 637, 640, 650, 659, 665, 697, 704, 706, 741, 743, 752, 754, 756, 793, 805, 814, 817, 825, 845, 849 & fn, 856, 869
Enlist India for Freedom! (E. Thompson), 354 fn
Erskine, Lord, 80 fn
Esperanto, 839
Ethiopia (Abyssinia), 275, 619 fn, 706, 719, 721, 739 & fn, 741
Ewing Christian College (Allahabad), 824

Faizpur, 804
————, Congress session at, 3, 28 fn, 43, 50 & fn, 99, 271, 281, 287, 289, 296, 397, 399, 431, 458 fn, 702 fn, 724, 766, 804
Fakhri, Maulana Shahid, 139 & *fn*, 146
Farruqui, Muhammad Miyan, 133 & *fn*, 134, 139, 146, 154, 158, 179
Federal Structure, 595 fn
Ferozepur, 592 fn
Fielden, Lionel, 845 & *fn*
Firth, J.R., 868
Florence, 794, 830
Fouad Selim Bey, 789
Foreign Policy for India (M.R. Masani), 727 fn
France, 263, 327, 472, 739 fn, 755, 856, 869
Franco, General, 457 & *fn*, 739 fn
French Revolution, 742
Future of East and West (F. Whyte), 623 & fn
Fyzabad, 35, 193 fn

Gadgil, P.V., 866 & fn
Gaidilieu Rani, 501, 502 & *fn*
Galliara, Niranjan C., 662 & fn
Gandhi, Mahatma, 56 fn, 66, 74 fn, 81 fn, 82 fn, 91 & fn, 95, 97 fn, 110 fn, 115, 159, 171, 180, 182, 195 fn, 214, 216 & fn, 217, 227 & fn, 228, 244, 245 & fn, 260, 272, 274 fn, 291 & fn, 294 & fn, 295, 300, 322, 361, 372, 379, 387 & fn, 388 fn, 404 & fn, 434, 438, 476, 502, 524, 543, 551 fn, 567 & fn, 569-573, 578 & fn, 587, 589, 615, 632, 635-637, 654, 693, 712 & fn, 757, 766, 768 fn, 774, 779, 791, 797, 838, 869
Gandhi Ashram (Banaras), 213
Gandhi-Irwin Pact, 595
Gandhi Ṣeva Sangh, 388 & fn
Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, 279 fn
Gangoh (Saharanpur), 206 fn
Garhdiwala, 264
Garhwal, 389, 802, 877, 879-882
Garibaldi, 698
Gauhati, 372
Gaya, 632 fn
Gaya conspiracy case, 632 fn
Geissler, Louise, 800 & fn
Geneva, 112 fn, 614, 618, 718, 726 & fn, 741, 784
George V, 787 fn
————, VI, 398 fn, 415 fn
George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 86, 589, 848 fn
Germany, 58, 228 fn, 275, 327, 753, 754, 800 fn, 820, 867 fn
Ghadar Party, 592 fn
Ghaznavi, Abdul Halim, 7 & *fn*
Ghaznavi-Burdwan Pact, 7 & fn, 8
Ghazni, 474 fn
————, Mahmud of, 474 & fn
Ghose, Motilal, 97 & fn
————, Saroj Kumar, 269 & fn
Gilder, M.D.D., 356 & *fn*
Glimpses of World History (J. Nehru), 785, 786, 794 fn, 862
Gochar (Garhwal), 879
Gollancz, Victor, 701 fn, 705 & *fn*
Gorakhpur, 15, 854 fn
Government of India Act of 1935, 15, 33, 47, 49, 52 fn, 58, 68, 69, 79, 81-83, 87, 91 fn, 92, 99, 215, 280, 297, 397 & fn, 434 & fn, 490, 498, 502, 594, 595, 599, 640, 651, 654, 655, 693
Gowdh, H.K., Veeranna, 577 & *fn*
Grand Muslim Union (Bombay), 182
Greece, 788
Guernica, 457
Gunther, John, 867 & *fn*
Gupta, Deshbandhu, 8 & *fn*
Gurukul Kangri (Hardwar), 463 fn

Habibganj (Assam), 502
Hakim, Abdul, 195 & fn
Hamirpur, 136, 139 fn, 145 fn, 146, 149, 171
Hansraj, Lala, 180 & *fn*, 182, 260

Hardikar, N.S., 771
Harduaganj (Aligarh), 372, 451, 452
Hardwar, 463 fn, 803, 877
Harijan, 294 fn, 372, 567 fn
Harilal, 16
Haripura, 22, 241, 368, 378 & fn, 444, 453, 516, 751, 872
————, Congress session at, 378 fn, 379 fn, 391 & fn, 450, 452 & fn, 516, 633, 634, 640, 740 & fn, 746, 759 fn, 764 fn, 765 fn, 862, 873
Haroun-Al-Rashid, 474 & *fn*
Harris, Duncan, 616 & fn
Harrison, Agatha, 28, 56 & fn, 84, 102, 282, 379, 634, 736, 803, 804, 853
Hasan, Wazir, 144 & *fn*, 196
Hassan, Yakub, 59 fn, 60 & *fn*
Hastings, Warren, 818 fn
Hazaribagh, 632
Heath, Carl, 28, 84, 619 & fn
Hemmerlin, Mlle., 784, 786
Hind Swaraj (Mahatma Gandhi), 543
Hindu Mahasabha, 8 & fn, 33, 38 fn, 130, 152 & fn, 185, 201, 219 & fn, 220, 356 fn
Hindustan, 156 fn, 157, 183, 202
Hindustani Seva Dal, 771
Hindustan Newspapers Co. Ltd., (Lucknow), 156 fn
Hindustan Times, 846 fn
Hitler, Adolf, 82, 195, 867, 875
Holland Hall (Allahabad University), 512
Hong Kong, 611 fn, 868
Hoshiarpur, 260
House of Lords (Britain), 81, 82, 250 fn
Howrah, 92
Hukerikar, R.S., 569 & fn, 570
Huq, Abdul, 214
————, Fazlul, 93 & *fn*-95, 120 fn, 188 & fn, 207 & fn, 208, 210, 211 fn
Husain, Masood, 199 & fn
Hussain, Muzaffar, 134, 138, 140, 146, 147, 154, 229
————, Vilayat, 133
Husseini, Amin, 723 & *fn*
Hutheesing, G.P., 745, 785, 801, 878, 879
————, Krishna, 801, 862, 877
Huxley, Aldous, 868
Hyderabad, 41 fn, 214, 263, 540
————, Nizam of, 41 fn
Hyderabad State Congress, 41 fn

Ibrahim, Hafiz Muhammad, 166 & *fn* 170, 191 fn, 220
I Change the World (A.L. Strong), 793 fn
Idgah dispute, 206
Iftikharuddin, Mian, 176 & *fn*
Independent Labour Party (British), 31 fn
Independent Party (India), 121 fn
India and the World (J. Nehru), 18, 588
Indian Science Congress, 806
Indian Student, 814 fn
Indian Students Association, 825
India Office, 354 & fn
Indra (Vidyavachaspati), 463 & *fn*
In Search of History (V. Sheean), 792
In Search of Reality (Lord Samuel), 378 fn
Inside Africa (J. Gunther), 867 fn
Inside Asia (J. Gunther), 867 fn
Inside Europe (J. Gunther), 867 fn
Inside Latin America (J. Gunther), 867 fn
Inside Russia Today (J. Gunther), 867 fn
Inside South America (J. Gunther), 867 fn
International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship, 431
International Brigade of Volunteers, 676 fn, 702 & fn, 712
International Children's Competition, 846 fn
International Dolls Museum (New Delhi), 846 fn
International Peace Campaign, 726 & fn, 741
International Peace Congress, 614, 618, 713, 726 & fn

Ipi, 472 fn
————, Faqir of, 472 & fn
Iran, 143, 639
Iraq, 474 fn
Ireland, 814
Irrawady, 88
Ismail, Mirza M., 554, 555, 561, 573, 574 fn, 576 & fn
Italy, 58, 275, 634, 734, 753, 788, 790, 793, 820, 845 fn

Jafri, Ali Sardar, 435 & *fn*
Jain, Ajit Prasad, 207 & *fn*
————, Lekhawati, 9 & *fn*
Jaipur, 535 fn
Jalaun, 136, 141 fn, 149, 160-163
Jallianwala Bagh, 13
Jamia Millia Islamia, 213, 214
Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind, 136 fn, 137 & fn, 149 fn, 154 fn, 157, 158 fn, 159 fn, 166, 167, 169, 170, 191, 194, 239
Jamshedpur, 4, 632
Janavani, 565 fn
Japan, 275, 295, 296, 307, 327, 370, 499, 618, 621, 630, 641, 664, 753, 817, 820
Java, 625
Jayabharat, 124 fn
Jerusalem, 723 fn
Jewish Advocate, 713 & fn
Jhansi, 104, 133, 134, 136, 138 & fn, 140, 146, 147, 149, 159, 171, 175 & fn, 177, 581 fn
Jharia, 4
Jinnah, M.A., 23, 24 & fn, 39, 119-121, 124 & fn, 129-133, 136, 137, 142 148-152, 164, 167, 176, 180-182, 184, 185 fn, 195, 201, 202, 205, 207-213, 215 fn, 216 fn, 220, 222 & fn, 224 & fn, 225 fn, 226 fn, 228 & fn, 232 & fn, 243 & fn, 244 fn, 245 fn, 340, 534, 715 fn
Jodhpur, 532 fn, 534, 536, 545, 546
Jog, Durgabai, 872 & *fn*
Joglekar, K.N., 22 fn
John Lane Ltd., 293 & fn, 848 & fn
Jordan, Robert O., 619, 721, 725
Josh, Sohan Singh, 403 fn, 769 fn
Joshi, Basant Kumar, 100 fn
————, S.M., 319 & *fn*
Justice Party, 675 & fn

Kabir, 625 & *fn*
Kailas, 875
Kakori, 305, 770 & fn, 771 & fn
Kakori conspiracy case, 771 & fn
Kangani system, 684 & fn
Kanishka, 474
Kanpur, 20, 35, 134, 149, 196, 317, 328-332, 334 & fn, 351, 353, 394 & fn, 632, 813, 823, 824, 825
Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin), 10, 333, 513, 521, 624, 667, 797, 798
Karachi, 284, 286, 315
————, Congress session at, 126, 234, 412, 601, 602, 768 fn
Kareli, 878
Karimganj, 189
Karnataka Sahitya Parishad, 576 fn
Kashi Vidyapith, 213
Kathgodam, 865
Kathiawar Youth Conference, 547
Katju, Kailas Nath, 54, 157, 801, 851
Kayastha Pathashala, 512
Kedarnath, 875, 877, 878, 880
Keith, A.B., 80 & *fn*, 655
Kemal Pasha, Ataturk, 640
Keshoram, 13 & fn, 403
Khali, 381, 865, 874-876
Khaliquzzaman, Choudhry, 77 & fn, 135, 141, 168, 170, 192, 201, 214, 217, 223, 227 & fn, 228 fn
Khan, Abdul Hamid, 290
————, H., 112 & fn
————, Khan Abdul Ghaffar, 98, 138, 140, 148, 159, 291 fn, 387, 460, 464, 466, 472, 473, 476
————, Mahmud-uz-Zafar, 41 & fn, 42
————, Mirza Ali, Haji (Faqir of Ipi), 472 & fn

———, Muhammad Ismail, 168 & *fn*, 192, 200, 210-212, 214, 217, 218, 219 fn, 223, 241
———, Ohabali, 414 & fn
———, Shaban Ali, 166 & *fn*
———, Shaukat, 453 & fn
———, Sikandar Hayat, 181 fn, 184 & *fn*, 258 fn, 260 & fn, 264 & fn, 265, 453 & fn, 454 & fn, 769 fn
———, Zafar Ali, 196 & fn, 245
Khan Sahib, 387, 462, 477 & fn, 478
Khare, N.B., 356 & *fn*, 371
Kher, A.G., 138 & *fn*, 139, 140, 144-146
———, B.G., 278 fn, 279 & *fn*
Khilafat, 135, 148
Khudai Khidmatgars, 473, 475, 476, 772
Kidwai, R.A., 134, 146, 152, 155, 162, 163, 169, 173, 175-177, 182, 183, 194, 357
Kingsway Hall (London), 705
Kitabistan, 382
Komas, Doctor, 704, 705
Kotdwar, 802
Kottapattam, 100 & fn, 249
Kripalani, J.B., 151 & fn, 152 & fn, 159, 169, 334, 335, 402, 539 fn
———, Krishna, 525, 802
———, Nandita, 802, 804
Krishak Praja Party, 94 & fn, 120 fn, 239, 409 fn
Kuala Lumpur, 660
Kuar, Ram, 460, 461
Kumaon hills, 232, 881, 882

Labour Monthly, 869
Labour Party (British), 747 & fn
Lahore, 211, 212, 245, 264, 276, 277, 519, 592 fn, 632
———, Congress session at, 587
Lahore conspiracy case, 592 & fn
Lal, Shyam Sunder, 856 & fn
Laljee, Hooseinbhoy A., 720 & *fn*
Lansdowne, 802
Lawrence, T.E., 522
Laxmidas, 542, 543
League of Nations, 179 fn, 275, 543 596, 619 & fn, 716 fn, 721, 722 fn 724, 727 fn, 740, 741, 745, 755
Left Book Club, 701 & fn, 705 & fn
Leighton, Clare, 87 & *fn*
Leisured Women (Lady Rhondda) 787 fn
Lenin, 861, 862, 869
Letters From a Father to His Daughter (J. Nehru), 381
L'Europe, 869
Levy, H., 868
Liberal Party (India), 87, 130
Life of Charles, Lord Metcalfe, (E. Thompson), 354 & fn, 868
Linlithgow, Lord, 105 fn, 250, 619
Lipari, 591 fn
Lippmann, Walter, 736 & fn
Literary Digest, 869
Living Age, 869
Lohia, R.M., 615, 703, 746
London, 18, 56, 103, 259, 261 354 & fn, 499, 615, 634, 653, 657 667, 701 fn, 703, 730, 783, 786 800 & fn, 804, 814 fn, 850, 853, 854 858 fn, 862, 869
Lothian, Lord, 74, 82 & fn, 378 & fn, 633, 634
Lucknow, 35, 55, 57 fn, 77 fn, 156 fn, 168, 170, 180, 183, 190 fn, 191 & fn, 210, 211, 216 fn, 232, 334, 340, 357, 383, 384, 386, 393 & fn, 405, 448, 519, 595 fn, 765, 766, 793, 803, 824, 825, 829, 877
———, Congress session at, 202, 218, 530, 618 fn, 765, 766
Lucknow Municipal Board, 201
Lucknow Pact, 144 fn
Ludhiana, 258 fn

Machiavelli, 520 fn
Madani, Maulana Ahmad Husain, 137 & *fn*
Madgavkar, Govind, 34 & fn, 712 & fn
Madina, 539 fn, 540

Madras, 59 fn, 196, 214, 249, 251, 263, 320, 336, 364 fn, 365, 368, 412 fn, 441, 555, 675, 723, 767, 797, 798
Madrid, 701, 702 & fn, 704, 710
Madurai, 797, 798
Magharam, 542, 543
Mahant Bhairongir, 543, 544
Mahmud, Syed, 138, 140, 146, 160
Majorca, 704
Majumdar, Niharendu Dutt, 408 fn
———, Suresh, 415
Malaviya, Kapil Deva, 851
———, Keshav Deva, 144-146, 154, 176, 183
———, M.M., 13, 14 fn, 152, 164, 403
Malaya, 43, 85, 90, 101, 104, 249, 256 & fn, 364 fn, 412, 417, 588, 625, 659, 670, 671, 673, 674, 677, 679 & fn, 681, 682, 716
Malkani, N.R., 864 & fn
Maloomat, 77 fn
Manchester Guardian, 88 & fn
Manchester Guardian Weekly, 868
Manchuria, 741
Mandalay, 662 fn
Manipur, 501
Mansarovar, 875
Marseilles, 739 & fn, 788
Marwar, 546
Marx, Karl, 869
Masani, M.R., 572 & fn, 573 fn, 727 & fn, 759 fn, 770
Mascaro, J., 711 & fn
Mashriqui, Tarzi, 539 & fn
Mass Awakeners Union (Bangalore), 549
Mathur, Biswanath, 632 & *fn*
Maxwell, George, 716 & *fn*
Maynard, Herbert John, 863 & *fn*
Mazzini, 698
Medhi, Bishnu Ram, 483 & *fn*
Meerut, 170, 382 fn
Mehta, Jivraj, 641 fn
Mela Ram, 206
Mellor, W., 34 & *fn*, 633
Menon, V.K. Krishna, 3, 29, 30 fn, 76, 85, 90, 111, 197, 293 & fn, 378 & fn, 515, 614, 618 fn, 633, 659 & fn, 703, 718, 725, 727, 847, 848 & fn, 862
Merwara, 532-534, 536
Mesopotamia, 799
Messina, 790
Mhow, 638
Midnapore, 263, 340
Mill Kamdar Union (Ahmedabad), 510 fn
Milton, John, 830
Mirzapur, 198
Misra, Dwarka Prasad, 356, 357
Mississipi Valley Committee, 806
Mitra, S.C., 442 & fn
Mitter, Bhaskar, 448 & *fn*
Modern Review, 519, 520 fn, 525, 862, 871
Mohamad, Riaz, 872 & fn
Mohanta, Mohan Chandra, 38 & fn
Moid, Syed Abdul, 138 & fn, 140
Mont Blanc, 788
Moradabad, 359
Moscow, 94, 394, 736 fn
Moscow Daily News, 793 fn
Mukherjee, Bankim, 408 & *fn*
Muktaram, 542, 544
Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union (Bombay), 330 fn
Munich, 812
Murarilal, Doctor, 191
Muslim Gujarat, 132 fn
Muslim League, 24 fn, 32 fn, 77 & fn, 78, 119-122, 125 fn, 129 fn, 130-132, 135 fn, 136 & fn, 137, 142, 143, 144 fn, 146, 150 & fn, 151, 159-161, 165-169, 171, 172, 173 fn, 175, 176 fn, 178-180, 185 & fn, 186 & fn, 188, 190 fn, 195, 197, 198, 200-202, 204-206, 209 & fn, 211 fn, 217, 218, 219 fn-223, 226 fn, 227, 232-234, 237-240, 244, 274, 340, 361, 409 fn, 445, 446, 468, 514, 516, 758, 767
———, session at Lucknow, 185 fn, 186, 188 fn, 202 fn, 209 fn
Mussolini, Benito, 28, 82, 195, 782 & fn, 853
Mussoorie, 851 fn
Muzaffarpur, 336

Mysore, 263, 538-540, 548, 551-553, 561, 757, 763, 764
Mysore Congress Board, 549 fn, 550, 552, 553, 557, 558, 560, 561, 566, 578

Nagpur, 600 fn, 791 & fn
———, Congress session at, 600 fn
Naidu, Padmaja, 519, 523, 796
———, Sarojini, 35
Nair, T.M., 675 fn
Najibabad, 191 fn, 205
Nambiar, A.C.N., 783, 784, 793
Nambudiripad, E.M.S., 529 & *fn*
Nanak, 625 & fn
Nanda Devi, 874, 875, 880
Nanking, 370
Naoroji, J.A.D., 853 & fn, 854 & fn
Narayan, Jayaprakash, 399 fn
Narendra Deva, Acharya, 113 fn, 134, 147, 153, 155, 169, 190, 386
Nariman, K.F., 100 fn, 278 & fn, 279, 300, 568 & fn
Nasir-ud-din, Maulana, 193 fn, 195
Nath, Raja Narendra, 863
National Academy of Sciences, 812
National Agricultural Party, 19 & fn, 166 & fn
National Awami Party, 176 fn
National Peoples Congress Committee (China), 733 fn
National Publication Society, 113 fn
Nator (Bangladesh), 269 fn
Natural Bent (L. Fielden), 845
Nazar, Shah, 198
Nehru, Indira, 28, 30, 91, 103, 144, 354, 360, 704, 781, 785, 787, 789, 791-795, 797, 798, 800-805, 853
———, Jawaharlal, 9 fn, 24 fn, 28 fn, 41 fn, 50 fn, 56 fn, 58, 59, 61 fn, 77 fn, 84 fn, 92 fn, 96 fn, 102 fn, 105, 110 & fn, 113 fn, 124 fn, 125 fn, 129 fn, 151 fn, 160 fn, 178 fn, 207 fn, 211 fn, 212 fn, 215, 221 fn, 226 fn, 231 fn, 232 fn, 244 fn, 245 fn, 256 fn, 268 fn, 291, 293 fn, 303, 304, 327, 354 fn, 355 fn, 374, 375, 388 fn, 408 fn, 409 fn, 411 fn, 415 fn, 433 & fn, 443, 444 fn, 446 fn, 449 fn, 454 fn, 468, 502 fn, 508 fn, 509 fn, 510 fn, 511 fn, 520-523, 571 fn, 573 fn, 576 fn, 585-587, 595 fn, 618 fn, 619 fn, 637 fn, 638 fn, 648 fn, 659 fn, 660 fn, 693, 711 fn, 736 fn, 765 fn, 779 fn, 823 fn, 845 fn, 847, 848 fn, 851 fn, 858 fn, 864 fn, 866 fn, 872 fn, 874 fn, 880 fn
———, presides over All India Convention of Congress legislators, 60-71; presides over Punjab Political Conference, 265-267; proceeds to Burma, 650, and to Malaya, 663; sails for Europe, 541, 638
———, on abolition of Zamindari, 292, 437; on agrarian reforms in U.P., 385; on allegation against Madras ministry, 355, 359, 360, 368, 441, 442; on all-India language, 832; on Alwar state, 537; on Anti-Constitution Day, 40, 50, 71, 72, 79, 398; on apathy of Muslims, 32, 33; on Assam Congress, 484; on Assam line system, 283, 290, 487, 488, 494, 496; on Assam Oil Company, 499; on assurances from Governors, 74, 83, 114; on *Autobiography*, 864; on award of titles, 349, 431; on ban on independence pledge, 14, 254, 401; on *Bande Mataram*, 38, 187, 222, 236, 237, 341, 342, 436, 437, 768; on Basic English, 838, 839; on beauty of Khali, 865; on Bengal Congress, 406, 407; on Bengal Government, 269, 270; on Bhopal state, 540, 541; on Bijnor bye-election, 191-197, 201; on Bikaner, 542, 543; on bombing of the frontier, 457-462; on boycott of Japanese goods, 731-733, 735; on breakdown of negotiations with Governors, 76; on British army in India, 590; on British Commonwealth, 597; on British Government, 457-460, 469, 470, 473, 490,

533, 621, 626, 628, 752, and capitalism, 352; on Bundelkhand bye-election, 135-155, 159, 160, 167, 175-177, 182, 183; on Burma Congress Committee, 662, 764; on Burmese politics, 661; on capitalists, 98, and capitalism, 681; on civil liberties in India, 261-264, 312, 347-349, 397, 556, 557, 559, 574; on civil liberties in Indian states, 530, 531; on civil services, 369, 389, 390, 589; on clove boycott, 715; on coalitions, 78, 110, 239; on collective security, 741, 747, 755, 756; on common script, 833; on Communal Award, 131, 234, 235; on communalism, 7, 8, 34, 39, 62, 127, 160, 173, 174, 201, 202, 228, 241, 464, 639, 758, 769, 822; on communalists, 446; on communal pacts, 240; on complete independence, 18, 65, 99; on Congress, 11, 21, 39, 53, 54, 61, 102, 121, 122, 125, 126, 150, 174, 178, 202, 208, 209, 240, 244, 300, 301, 310, 311, 326, 337, 367, 374, 388, 399, 482, 491, 562, 574, 585, 667, 669, 670, 751, 752, 757, 766; on Congress and Goans, 857, 858; on Congress Hospital (Allahabad), 777, 778; on Congress and Indian states, 429, 529, 535, 546, 547, 549-551, 554, 556, 560, 564, 566, 580, 581; on Congress and kisan sabhas, 37, 38, 391, 392, 417-425, 429, 430; on Congress and labour, 363; on Congress and mass contact, 49, 62-64, 67, 73, 74, 87, 121, 123, 127, 128, 130, 156, 157, 172, 174, 178, 202, 218, 220, 273, 339, 340, 402, 419, 428, 429; on Congress ministries, 281, 289, 292, 293, 297, 298, 303, 304, 306, 309, 311, 318, 323, 324, 326, 337-339, 344-346, 362, 366, 370, 389, 393, 435, 465, 729, 730, 757; on Congressmen and official contacts, 426, 427; on Congress and Muslim League, 178, 180, 192, 193, 226, 233, 234; on Congress and Muslim League in U.P., 165-171; on Congress objectives in legislatures, 287; on Congress organization, 11, 48, 373, 477, 484, 489, 490, 493, 529, 559, 577, 729; on Congress Socialist Party, 410, 438; on Congress victory in elections, 26-29, 31, 32, 61-63; on Congress and war, 459, 731, 735; on Congressmen and official receptions, 364, 398; on Congressmen and titles, 431; on constituent assembly, 68, 397, 433; on constitutional crisis, 81, 113-116; on constructive programme, 96; on defence of India, 606-609, 664, 665, 753; on democracy, 598, 826; on detenus, 99, 257, 258, 271, 272, 276, 592, 769-771; on Dhubri strike, 498; on differences between Governors and Congress ministers, 377; on difficulties in public life, 453; on disciplinary action, 187-189, 409; on discipline among Congressmen, 1, 70; on dispatch of Indian troops abroad, 327, 607, 611-613, 617, 618, 719, 722, 820; on display of news, 415, 416; on division of provinces, 600, 601; on Dominion Status, 65, 66, 97, 636, 664; on duty of legislators, 49, 286, 485; on Edward VIII, 805; on elections, 6-8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23; on European situation, 673; on examinations, 789, 790, 795, 796; on external aggression, 98, 630, 631; on false reporting, 434; on fascism, 586, 706, 707; on fascism in Goa, 263; on fascist tendencies in India, 852, 853; on Fazlul Huq, 94, 340; on federal and provincial legislatures, 603, 604; on federation, 294, 378, 379, 397, 435, 531, 655, 730, 756, 759, 760; on flying, 788; on foreign education, 328, 854-856; on foreign policy, 609, 745-747; on French Revolution, 742; on frontier policy, 97, 98, 458-462, 469, 470, 473, 475; on fundamental rights, 601; on future constitution of India, 595-610; on Gaidilieu Rani, 502; on Gandhi Seva Sangh, 388; on Garhwal, 880, 881; on glory of Vienna, 783; on Government of India Act of 1935, 70, 72, 75, 83, 251, 297, 300, 306, 311, 585, 595; on Governors and cabinet meet-

ings, 356; on Harduaganj conference, 452; on Harijans, 41; on help to China, 641, 734-736, 744; on help to Spain, 295, 703, 708, 710-712; on himself, 481, 520-523, 847, 868, 869, 870; on Hindu law, 818; on Hindustani, 832, and its development, 828, 840, 841; on Hindustani Seva Dal, 772, 773; on Hindu-Urdu controversy, 826-830, 834-836; on his election tour, 41-43; on his wife's illness, 786; on hunger strikes, 274, 591, 593, 613, 614, 770; on inauguration of Chinese Hall in Santiniketan, 709; on incident at Ahmedabad station, 508; on Independence Day celebration, 400; on independence pledge, 635; on India and China, 738; on Indian army, 754; on Indian labour in Malaya, 678-684, 689-692; on Indian languages, 627, 827, 828, 830, 831, 833, 837, 838, 843-845; on Indians abroad, 652, 663, 670, 687-692; on Indian states, 263, 575, 577, 586, 599, 629, 756, 762; on Indian students abroad, 814, 815; on India's capacity for adaptability, 622-624; on India's culture, 624, 625; on India's diversity, 620; on India's head of state, 602; on industrial policy, 315, 316; on influences on him, 869; on internationalism, 668, 728; on Japan's aggression, 327, 719, 724, 820; on Jinnah's attitude, 24, 119, 120, 124, 132, 184, 207, 211-216, 222-227, 232-241, 243-245; on Jodhpur state, 545, 546; on journalistic ethics, 415, 416; on jute workers' strike, 93, 94; on Kanpur mill strikes, 329-334, 351-353; on khadi, 109, 404, 405, 439, 440; on kisan demonstrations, 383-386; on labour problems, 329; on labour and strikes, 317, 322; on land problems, 495, 628, 863; on language newspapers, 448; on law and society, 817, 818; on law courts, 848, 849; on League of Nations, 275, 596, 740, 754, 755; on Lenin, 861, 862; on lessons of elections, 62, 63; on literature, 827, 829; on Madurai temple, 799; on Mahatma Gandhi's meeting the Viceroy, 291; on Malaviya and Nationalist Party, 13, 14; on Malaya's wealth, 675, 698; on medium of instruction, 841, 842; on memorial to Motilal Nehru, 777-780; on mill strikes in Assam and Bengal, 256, 257; on ministerial crisis, 379; on minorities, 126, 131, 193, 208, 214, 234-236, 765, 767; on minority ministries, 95, 111, 249-254, 653, 663; on moral rearmament, 858, 859; on Moscow trials, 197, 736; on Muslim League, 129, 142, 143, 150, 166, 168-170, 179, 185, 186, 193-198, 200, 201, 217, 221, 239; on Muslim masses and Bengal Congress, 408; on Muslim support to the Congress, 218, 239; on Mysore state, 538, 548, 554, 567-573; on national flag, 205, 219, 220, 238, 291, 366, 425, 430, 505, 507, 508, 510, 513, 514, 559; on nationalism, 596, 668, 675, 743; on need for good relations with Burma, 658; on nonviolence, 758; on office acceptance, 23, 47, 50-52, 54-57, 58, 64, 65, 67-69, 73, 100, 101, 104, 105, 112, 116, 288, 302, 323, 350, 351; on official languages, 841; on opium evil, 486, 493; on Palestine, 303, 534, 713, 714, 720, 721, 723, 726, 737; on Pathans, 469-471; on planning, 806, 807; on planning of tour programme, 5; on political exiles, 349; on political organisations, 129; on political prisoners, 313, 325, 328, 374, 433; on Poona Pact, 16; on postal censorship, 321; on preservation of wild life, 354; on princes, 532; on princes and federation, 92, 267; on prison life, 877; on problems of Assam, 493-499; on proposal to re-elect him Congress President, 452; on proscription and censorship, 313, 349; on prosecution of Batliwala, 360; on Punjab Congress, 275, 403, 445; on Punjab Government, 184, 257, 258, 265-268; on red flag, 366, 425, 430, 505, 510, 514, 515; on red flag and national flag, 507-511; on religion and politics, 120, 412, 413; on repression in Chittagong, 255;

on riots, 228-231, 242, 245, 357, 358; on role of cartoonists, 846, 847; on role of progressive writers, 859, 860; on salaries of public servants, 284-286, 307, 375, 376, and Congress members of legislatures, 448; on science, 810; on science and religion, 809; on scientific outlook, 809; on sectarianism, 9, 32; on sedition, 343; on selection of Congress candidates, 8, 16; on self-reliance, 781, 784; on sending Congress representatives abroad, 712, 713; on separation of Burma, 646, 650, 652, 653, 655; on separation of judiciary from executive, 350; on Shia Conference, 190; on socialism, 131, 682, 850; on Soviet Russia, 866, 867; on Spanish civil war, 598, 702, 703, 708; on Speaker and politics, 283, 376; on Sri Lanka, 645, 647, 649; on staff work, 3, 6; on stone-throwing incident, 161; on students and national service, 816, and politics, 812, and their duties, 822-825; on suppression of news, 415, 416, and ideas, 563; on supreme court, 606; on Sylhet, 486, 494, 500; on tea gardens, 497; on terrorism, 594; on tour of Gujarat, 443; on trade unions, 316, 353; on training of volunteers, 450, 451, 771-774; on transfer of territories, 532, 534, 536; on Trotsky's trial, 654; on unity conference, 181, 446; on unity of India, 75, 491, 586, 599, 622-624; on Urdu, 834; on Urdu journals, 183; on vested interests, 394; on Viceroy's speech, 250, 251, 253; on victimisation of students, 35, 36; on violence, 314; on visit to Assam, 492; on visit to Burma and Malaya, 104, 657-661, 668-678, 684-695, 697, 698; on visit to frontier, 467-472; on war danger, 275, 398, 728, 746, 752; on woes of peasants, 122, 315, 335, 861; on women, 431, 616, 676, 677, 872; on workers, 352, 353, 375, 385, 679; on world problems, 720-722

————, Kamala, 543, 781 fn, 790 fn

————, Mohanlal, 777

————, Motilal, 77 fn, 777, 779 & fn 783

————, Shridhar, 783

————, Swarup Rani, 785, 791

Nehru—The Years in Power (V. Sheean), 792 fn

Neibuhr, Reinhold, 869

Nepal, 4

Netherlands India, 753

New Delhi, 96 fn, 846 fn

New Republic, 869

News Chronicle, 585

New Statesman, 868

New Times, 226 fn, 732 fn

New York, 732, 867

New York Nation, 869

New Zealand, 619, 721

Nigerian National Democratic Party, 737 fn

Notes on The Way (Lady Rhondda), 787 fn

Official Language Commission, 279 fn

Olsvangar, J., 737

Ootacamund, 381

Orai, 140, 153, 160-163, 171, 173 fn

Orchha, 580 fn, 581

Ottawa, 614 fn

Oudh—see Avadh

Oxford, 103, 360, 805, 821, 853

Oxford Group, 858 & fn

Oxford History of India (V. Smith), 623

Oxford University Press, 382

Palermo, 792

Palestine, 143, 178 fn, 179 fn, 303, 534, 639, 720 & fn, 737, 768

Palestine And The Arab World, 737 fn

Palestine Conference, 179 & fn

Pande, Manilal, 141 & *fn*, 146

Pandit, Chandralekha, 785, 791

————, Nathimal, 543

———, Nayantara, 785
———, Rita, 785
———, R.S., 865
———, Vijayalakshmi, 389, 797, 805, 854 & fn, 878, 879
Pant, G.B., 78, 152-154, 159, 163, 168, 170, 227, 365, 382, 632, 856 fn
Paris, 713, 783, 815, 853, 869
Parliamentary Joint Select Committee, 81 fn
Parmanand, Bhai, 119, 185
———, Pandit, 592 & fn
Patel, Vallabhbhai, 14 fn, 37 & fn, 55, 78, 100, 171, 300, 334, 446 fn, 539 fn, 619, 769 fn, 770
———, Vithalbhai, 278, 279
Pathak, Radhey Shyam, 229 & *fn*
Patna, 829
Paton, Ernest F., 858
Patwardhan, Achyut, 14 fn
Pauri, 879
P.C. Banerji Hostel (Allahabad University), 512 & fn
Peasant and Labour Party, 408 fn
Peel Commission, 714 fn
Penang, 659, 660, 678, 679
Personal History (V. Sheean), 792 fn
Peshawar, 519, 802
Philippines, 625, 753
Philosophy and The Ordinary Man (Lord Samuel), 378 fn
Philosophy for a Modern Man (H. Levy), 868
Pilibhit, 15
Pillai, K. Parameswaran, 648 & fn
———, K. Shankar, 846 & fn, 847
Plato, 810
Plaza (Lucknow), 824
Pondicherry, 263, 797
Poona, 506
Poona Pact, 16 & fn, 164 fn
Port Dickson (Malaya), 679, 694
Portugal, 263
Praja Sewak, 536 fn
Praja Socialist Party, 229 fn, 319 fn
Prasad, B.N., 512 & fn
———, Rajendra, 151, 152 & fn, 164, 165 & fn, 181, 208, 224, 233, 317 fn, 399 fn, 454, 572, 573 fn, 677
———, Sushila, 854 & fn
Prayag (Allahabad), 514
Prem Chand, 382
Press Kamgar Union (Bombay), 511
Prevention of Seditious Meetings and Publications Act, 537
Punjab Political Conference, 202 fn, 268 fn
Punjab Unity Conference, 181 & fn, 235 & fn
Puri, 624
Puri, Ruplal, 402 fn, 403 & fn
Purnanand, Master, 403 fn
Pushkarendu, 543

Qasim, Maulvi Abul, 158 & fn
Quest for Certainty (J. Dewey), 868

Raipur, 198
Raja Bhushanarao, 410 & fn
Rajagopalachari, C., 336, 337 fn, 355 & fn, 360, 368, 412 fn, 413 & fn
Rajan, T.S.S., 441 & *fn*, 442
Rajasthan, 531
Rajendra Kumari (Rani), 145 & *fn*, 149
Rajputana, 829
Rajputana State People's Organisation, 546 fn
Rajshahi, 269 fn
Rajwade, Rani Laxmibai, 432
Ramamurthi, N., 551 & fn
Ramaswami, S.V., 440 & *fn*
Rameswaram, 624
Ramnagar, 543
Ranga, N.G., 36 & fn, 37 fn, 760 fn
Rangaswamy, P., 576 & fn
Rangoon, 409, 660, 678, 697
Rangoon Daily News, 660
Ranikhet, 865
Rao, V.S. Narayana, 579 & fn
Rasheed, Athar, 202 *fn*
Rashtra Seva Dal, 319 fn

Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix, 30 fn
Reconstruction of India (E. Thompson), 354 fn
Reddy, K.C., 566 & *fn*, 569, 570, 575
Renascent Africa (N. Azikiwe), 737
Revolt of 1857, 834
Reynolds, Reginald, 587 fn
Rhondda, Lady, 787 & fn
Riddle of MacArthur (J. Gunther), 867 fn
Rishikesh, 879
Rolland, Romain, 732
Rome, 782, 783, 788
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 682
Round Table, 737
Round Table Conference, 93 fn, 653, 654
Rousseau, 742
Roy, Ellen, 105
———, M.N., 103, 803
Russell, Bertrand, 732, 868, 869
Russia, 327, 459, 630, 664, 811, 812, 861-863, 866
Russia In Flux (H.J. Maynard), 863 fn
Russian Peasant and other Studies (H.J. Maynard), 863 fn
Rutherford, Lord, 806 & fn-808

Saharanpur, 198, 199, 206 & fn, 437 fn
Said, Maulana Ahmad, 196
Sainik, 536 fn
Saklatvala, S., 703 fn
———, Sehri, 703 & fn
Salem, 441 fn
Salem Times, 175 fn
Sampurnanand, 381
Samuel, H.L., (Lord Samuel), 378 & *fn*
Samyukta Socialist Party, 319 fn
Santiniketan, 519, 709, 710, 738 fn, 801
Sarabhai, Bharati, 857, 864
———, Leena, 864, 865
———, Mridula, 864, 865
Sarkar, N.R., 409
Sastri, V.S. Srinivasa, 679 & fn, 684, 693
Satyamurti, S., 617, 618, 719
Satyanarayana, G., 507 & *fn*
Satyapal, 184, 260, 264 fn, 445, 446 & fn
Saxena, Mohanlal, 78, 133, 134, 206, 375, 593 & fn
Sayidur Rahman, 221 & fn
Scarpa, 782
Sea Customs Act, 262
Sen, Arabinda, 380 & fn
Seth, Damodar Swarup, 147
———, Santram, 403
Shah, Abdulla, 477, 478
———, K.T., 113 fn, 595 fn
Shahidganj, 205, 235
Shahjahanpur, 35, 158
Shaistaganj, 502
Shakti, 13 fn
Shanghai, 311, 589, 611, 722
Shankaracharya, 624
Shankarlal, Lala, 538
Shankar's Weekly, 846 fn
Shannodevi, 13 & *fn*
Sharma, Achleshwar Prasad, 536 & *fn*. 545
———, Pyarelal, 382 & *fn*
———, Rameshwar Prasad, 581 & tn
Shastri, L.B., 307
———, S.B., 852
Shaw, George Bernard, 814, 815
Shawe, E.B., 96 & fn, 462
Sheean, Vincent, 792 & *fn*
Sherwani, Fida, 153-155
———, N.A.K., 133 & *fn*, 134, 136-141, 144-148, 153 & fn, 154, 159 & fn, 160, 171, 177, 182, 851
Shillong, 492
Shohet, A.E., 713 fn
Shroff, Satyanarain, 542, 544
Shukla, C.B., 508 & fn
———, R.S., 580 & fn
Shwe Dagon, 696, 697
Shyamlal, 16 & fn
Sicily, 790, 792, 793
Siddalingiah, T., 549 & *fn*
Siddiqui, Siddiq Ahmad, 178 & fn
Sikar, 535 & fn
Sikh League, 130, 201
Silchar, 499
Simla, 262, 506

Simon Commission, 590, 646 fn
Sind, 238
Singapore, 611 fn, 646, 656, 660, 675, 678, 679
Singh, Bhagat, 632,
———, Chandra, 802 & *fn*
———, Dewan Shatrughna, 139 & *fn*, 144, 146, 149, 154, 155, 176
———, Har Prasad, 145 & fn, 146
———, Kunwar Jasbir, 198
———, Lal Awadhesh Pratap, 580 & *fn*, 581
———, Narayan, 802 & fn
———, P.S., 814 & fn
———, Sangat, 437 & fn
Sinha, Srikrishna, 336, 369
Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, 309
Sivapur, 579 fn
Smith, Vincent A., 623 & *fn*
Socialist League (British), 31 fn
Society of Friends, 704
Somerville College (Oxford), 103, 796
Songs of the City (A.L. Strong), 793 fn
Sorbonne, 789, 795
South Africa, 216 fn, 651, 664
South Indian Liberal Federation, 675 fn
Spain, 66, 229, 275 295, 296, 406 fn, 457, 459, 472, 474, 598, 654, 672, 676 & fn, 701, 711, 739, 741, 755, 756
Spain-India Committee, 703 & fn, 705
Special Powers Act, 362
Spengler, Oswald, 869
Srikantaiah, M.L., 565 & fn
Sri Lanka, 265, 645-649, 711 & fn
Srinagar (Garhwal), 878-880
Sriniketan, 801, 804
Sri Prakasa, 453 & fn, 617 & fn
Srivastava, Jwala Prasad, 394 fn
Stalin, Josef, 736 fn
Stanley, O.F.G., 105 fn
Statesman, 96 fn, 226 fn, 232 fn, 436 & fn
Statute of Westminster, 65 & fn, 66, 664
St. Peter (Italy), 788
Strong, Anna Louise, 793 & *fn*
Subbarayan, P., 359 & *fn*, 381
Suhrawardy, Shahid, 406 & *fn*
Suisse, 784, 789, 800
Sujangarh, 543
Sumatra, 625
Surat, 132 fn, 183
Swaraj Bhawan, 777-780
Swaraj Bhawan Trust, 777
Swaraj Party, 166 fn, 170, 220, 720 fn
Swatantra, Teja Singh, 112 & *fn*, 258, 289
Swedish Match Trust, 253, 257, 498
Switzerland, 112 fn, 784, 800, 804
Sybil, (B. Disraeli), 680 fn
Sylhet, 189, 481, 486, 493, 494, 499-501
Syria, 143

Tagore, Rabindranath, 186, 187, 591, 734, 790 & fn, 801, 838
Tandon, P.D., 231 & *fn*
———, Purushottamdas, 145, 351, 376
Tan Yun-Shan, 731 fn, 738 & *fn*
Taormina, 792-794
Teertha, Ramananda, 41 & *fn*
Tehri, 877
Tellicherry, 360 fn
Testament of Youth (V. Brittain), 796 & fn
Thakore Harivadan, 450 fn
This was My World (Lady Rhondda), 787 fn
Thompson, Edward, 354 & *fn*, 375 & fn, 585-587, 805, 868
Tilak, Lokamanya, 109
Tilak Day, 507 fn
Time and Tide, 787, 868
Times (London), 15, 82 fn
Times Literary Supplement, 869
Times of India, 435
Times of Malaya, 698
Tipperah, 189, 407
Tiruchchirappalli, 441 fn
Toller, Ernst, 852 & fn
Tongues of Men (J.R. Firth), 868
Toronto, 826 fn

Trafalgar Square (London), 615
Travancore Coconut Growers Association, 648 fn
Travancore Temple Entry Proclamation, 413 fn
Treaty of Versailles, 755
Tribhuvan, A.B., 308 & fn
Tribune (Lahore), 268 & fn, 869
Tribune (London), 34 & fn, 90, 633
Trieste, 783, 784
Trincomalee, 646
Trishul, 880
Trotsky, Leon, 659 & fn, 736 & fn
Turkey, 143
Tyagi, Sharmada, 12 & *fn*

Udaipur, 532 fn, 534-536
Umayyad, 474 fn
Unionist Party (Punjab), 184 fn, 258 fn, 269, 403
United Provinces Agriculturists Debt Redemption Bill, 386 fn
United Provinces Political Conference, 803 & fn
United Provinces Sugar Factories Control Act, 73 fn
United Provinces Tenancy Bill, 379 fn, 393 fn
United States of America, 370, 376, 406 fn, 592 fn, 602, 621, 627, 630, 664, 753, 807, 852, 853, 856, 869
Unnao, 851 fn
Upadhyaya, S.D., 519

Valencia, 704
Varnashrama Swarajya Sangha, 412, 413 fn
Vendredi (Paris), 869
Vesugar, Pilloo, 782 & fn
Victor Emmanuel III, 782 fn
Viduraswatham, 539 fn
Viduthalai, 175, 441
Vienna, 783 & fn, 784, 875
Vijaya, 463 fn
Vijayaraghavachariar, C., 558
Visvabharati, 406 fn
Volapuk, 839
Voltaire, 742
Vyas, Jainarain, 546 & fn

Walli, Abdul, 77 & *fn*
Wardha, 28, 52 fn, 53, 56, 73, 86, 101, 103, 107, 110, 134, 138, 140, 144, 146, 148, 159, 163, 168, 192, 204, 214, 280, 287, 304, 336, 361, 401, 409, 453, 612, 712, 792, 796, 797, 804, 851
Waziristan, 460, 475 fn
Wein—see Vienna
Weizmann, Chaim, 726 & fn
West Godavari, 507 fn
Which Way to Peace? (B. Russell), 868
Whitley Commission, 93 & fn
Whyte, Frederick, 623 & fn
Women's International Conference, 739 fn, 740
Women's International for Peace and Freedom, 616 fn
World Peace Congress, 755
World Students Association, 815

Zaheer, 454 & fn
———, Sajjad, 158 & *fn*, 230, 307 851 & fn
———, Syed Ali, 180 & *fn*
Zanzibar, 349, 640 fn, 651, 696, 714-718, 721, 723, 724
Zetland, Lord, 81 & *fn*, 82, 84 & fn, 95 fn, 99, 104, 105, 250 & fn, 638 & fn, 640
Zurich, 726 & fn